

A  
sections and friendly  
ADDRESS

TO THE  
Not Committed  
IMPRIMATUR,

18 March  
1678

R<sup>m</sup> D<sup>m</sup> Arch<sup>m</sup> Cant.  
à Sacris domesticis,

Geo. Hooper.

Printed by J. W. for the Bishop of the  
Bishop's Head in St. Paul's Church-yard.  
MDCCLXXV

A  
sections and friendly  
ADDRESS

TO THE  
Not Committed  
IMPRIMATUR,

18 March  
1678

R<sup>m</sup> D<sup>m</sup> Arch<sup>m</sup> Cant.  
à Sacris domesticis,

Geo. Hooper.

Printed by J. W. for the Bishop of the  
Bishop's Head in St. Paul's Church-yard.  
MDCCLXXV



47  
A F. 13. 62

Serious and Friendly  
**ADDRESS**  
TO THE  
**Non-Conformists,**

Beginning with the  
**Anabaptists.**

OR, AN  
**ADDITION**  
TO THE  
**Perswasive to Peace and Unity.**



---

By *W. A. Allen* -

---

Luke 22. 32.

*When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren.*

---

**LONDON,**

Printed by *J. M.* for *Walter Kettilby*, at the  
Bishops Head in *St Pauls Church-Yard*,  
**MDC LXXVI**



TO THE  
Hon-Consulate  
of the



T

the City  
of Venice  
and the  
Doge  
of the  
Republic  
of Venice

~~625103~~

20,2505

of the  
Republic  
of Venice  
and the  
Doge  
of the  
Republic  
of Venice



## THE PREFACE.

**T**HE design of the following Address is to perswade to the Re-uniting of a divided Church. And the unity of the Church is that which our Lord and Saviour earnestly, and with reiterated Petitions prayed for to his Father, and which his Apostles after him did with the most pathetical expressions they could well take unto themselves, perswade the Christians to maintain. By which we may perceive, That the success of Christs design to be carried on by the Gospel, does very much depend upon this Union; which was the reason why the Heart of Christ, and of his Apostles, were so much set upon it. And if so; Then Divisions, Sittings,

A 3

The Preface.

Things, Factions and Dissensions in the Church, and separation of one part of it from another, must needs tend to frustrate and disappoint our Saviour in his design of Grace, and to deprive the Church where these take place, of the benefit and comfort in great part, which he intended them in recommending the Christian Religion to them: And then it will follow also, That those who are most of the mind, spirit and temper of our Saviour and his Apostles, are and will be most tender, lest they should make any breach in the Church, or disturb the Peace of it; and most careful to do what in them lies to repair breaches when made: But contrariwise, that those who are most venturous in making breaches upon pretences that will not abide an impartial tryal, and least careful to close up those which are made, are to that degree that they are so, devoid of a Christ-like frame of mind and temper of spirit. All which looks most unpleasantly upon so many as will not do all that they can do to prevent

## The Preface.

prevent the farther growth of Schism,  
and to heal the Churches wounds al-  
ready made by it.

Considering all which, and the de-  
plorable state and condition of the  
Church in this Nation by reason of  
Schism, and what men suffer and are  
like to suffer thereby in their religious  
interest; I cannot imagine wherein,  
or by what, good men can better ap-  
prove themselves to Christ in any one  
thing, and more answer the Joy of  
his heart, nor better serve their Gene-  
ration, than by endeavouring heartily  
according to the capacity they are in,  
and the opportunity they have, to pro-  
mote the re-uniting of the divided  
parts of the Church of God in this  
Nation. And if by endeavours of this  
nature, any think I have acted more  
than comes to my share in this Address  
or otherwise; it hath been out of the  
abundance of my affection to so good  
and necessary a work, which will  
easily obtain pardon from those that  
are for peace. I cannot say, but that  
many attempts of this Nature have

## The Preface

been made by others, and endeavoured  
used to this end. But the reason why  
so little comes of it, is, because those  
who are the Aggressors, or many of them,  
would needs make themselves the Cen-  
ter of Union, and Standard of Com-  
munion. But how unreasonable it is  
to expect that an union should be  
brought to pass upon such terms, or  
to think it fit that our breaches should  
lie open till it can, is easie to apprehend.  
For when will all Presbyteri-  
ans think you be perswaded to turn  
Anabaptists or Independents, or In-  
dependents to turn Anabaptists, or  
Anabaptists to turn Independents, or  
both to turn Presbyterians? Or if  
they should, when will those of the way  
of the Church of England fall in with  
them? So that there seems a necessity  
of one of these two things; either for  
all the subdivided parts of the Agres-  
sors to Re-unite themselves again to  
the Church of England, from which  
they unduly rent themselves: Or else  
to perpetuate our various Schisms un-  
till we have made our selves thereby a  
prey

## The Preface.

prey to the common Adversary. And whoever are of the mind to put things on this issue, and to run that hazard rather than to come to such terms of accommodation as are not sinful, though otherwise not altogether such as they could wish, will certainly shew themselves to be persons of but private selfish spirits, regarding more their own personal satisfaction and private conveniency, than the publick benefit of the Church in general: a temper very unworthy a Christian, and far from a laying down the life for the brethren. It was the true Mother who was for yielding to her Competitrix, rather than the Child should be divided. Besides, by continuing a Schism upon such terms which will not amount to any sufficient or just cause, they make themselves accountable for all the dreadful effects of it.

Since then there is no probability that the Aggressors in their subdivisions will ever settle or unite upon any one of their narrow foundations, it will I doubt not be much more becoming

## The Preface.

ing them as Christians, for them all to reconcile themselves to the Church of England, rather than to perpetuate such a complex Schism as we see hath cast both Church and Nation into a Convulsion, and threatens its final ruin. Do you or can you think that there is at this day, after all tryals made, any men upon Earth better Christians than many of those who have been bred in the Church of England since the Reformation from Popery, and who have lived and died in her Communion? I can hardly think that any sober, intelligent person will venture to say there is. And if not, what is the matter then if nothing but the being very good Christians be your design, why (rather than to make a Schism) that will not satisfy you for the attaining to it, which hath been so successful for the effecting this end in so many other worthy persons as have left us an example of holy living, worthy our imitation? Why the matter, as I apprehend it, stands thus: Those whose minds had been influenced



## The Preface.

fluenced and affected with the different principles of the old Non Conformists, Brownists, and Anabaptists. before our late unhappy Civil Wars brake out, took the opportunity which it gave them, to begin a work of reformation in this Nation, as they Notioned it to be. And although they all still agreed with the Church of England in doctrines of faith and a holy life, and in those doctrines wherein it opposeth the Church of Rome; yea and in the substance of Divine worship also: Yet they all opposed the Church of England in the external form of worship, and in her order and Government. But when they had done so, they could not agree among themselves what form of worship and Government, in opposition to all other, is indeed of Divine Right, but therein sharply opposed one another. So that this so called Reformation, produced more divisions and separations, and multiplied more, and more monstrous Sects, than ever there were in the Nation before. Notwithstanding the sad experience of all which, and  
not-

## The Preface.

notwithstanding the means used by the Higher Powers to reduce them; yet it seems these several divided parts have thought themselves concerned upon one account or other, still to carry on their esteemed Reformation in their several different ways, and rather to run the hazard of all the ill consequences of their division in common from the Church of England, and of their several subdivisions among themselves, than to return to our Parochial Communion.

Now then, the endeavour of the following Address, is to shew these two things especially. The one is, That both the Principles and practice in many things, wherein this Reformation endeavoured by them doth consist, are really corruptions, and things which ought themselves to be Reformed. The other is, that if any Emendation in matters Ecclesiastical, shall be found convenient for the peace, unity, and stability of the Church of England; as I will not deny but there may, the present genius and temper of  
many

## The Preface

many of this Nation considered (for Moles for the hardness of the peoples hearts, by Gods direction put that in the body of the Law, which otherwise would not have been necessary :) Yet to seek this by separation from our Parish Churches, and by gathering Churches out of them, and by keeping assemblies in opposition to them, is no good method of proceeding therein, but such as tends to hurt the Church of God much more than to do it good, and to set people back and not to bring them forward in that wherein the heart and spirit of true Christianity lies. And for my Justification in this undertaking, I have the old Non-Conformists so far on my side, as that, as Mr. Baxter saith, Such as Mr. Cartwright, Egerton, Hildertham, Dod, Amesius, Parker, Bains, Brightman, Ball, Bradshaw, Paget, Langly, Nicols, Hering, and many such, wrote more against separation, than the Conformists did. And the former writings of the present Presbyterians, abound also with invectives against the pra-

lice

## The Preface.

*Disc of gathering Churches out of our Parish Churches. Yea those who have been chief in the Congregational way, have in their Apologetical Narration told the World, That all that Conscience of defilement they conceived cleaved to the worship of God in our Parish Churches, or of the unwarrantable power of Church Governours exercised therein, did never work in any of them any other thought, much less opinion, but that multitudes of the Parish Congregations, were the true Churches and body of Christ, and the Ministry thereof a true Ministry. And again: We have always profest (say they) (and that in these times when the Churches of England were most, either actually over-spread with defilements, or in the greatest danger thereof) that we both did and would hold a Communion with them as the Churches of Christ. I shall not offend you by making that improvement of these Concessions by reflections, which the matter is capable of. Only I heartily wish, That for  
the*

## The Preface.

the honour of our Religion, we may all be careful to do that which is good and commendable, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of men: and that nothing may be done but what we can give some competent account of unto men. A thing wherein you have left even such as wish you very well, much to seek, as not knowing how to reconcile your principles and your practice. What hath been offered by some in order to it from the consideration of the different circumstances of former and present times, I must needs say falls very short of it, and hath not with such a return from other some, as hath even left it without any strength at all, especially in that which relates to Lay Communion.

Doctrine of Schism opened and applied to gathered Churches.

A stop to the course of separation.

Now the God of love and peace at last lead us out of all those distractions and confusions into which our own weakness and folly hath betrayed us, into paths of purity, peace, and  
Love

## The Preface.

love, and bestow upon us all a spirit  
of love, and of a sound mind, that  
so we may all come to keep the unity  
of the spirit in the bond of peace.

And thus we pray, O Lord, our Father,  
that thou wilt give us grace to  
keep the unity of the spirit in the bond  
of peace, and to be at one with  
the Father, and with the Son, and  
with the Holy Spirit, and with  
all the saints, and with the whole  
Church, and with the world, and  
with all creatures, and with all things.

And thus we pray, O Lord, our Father,  
that thou wilt give us grace to  
keep the unity of the spirit in the bond  
of peace, and to be at one with  
the Father, and with the Son, and  
with the Holy Spirit, and with  
all the saints, and with the whole  
Church, and with the world, and  
with all creatures, and with all things.

And thus we pray, O Lord, our Father,  
that thou wilt give us grace to  
keep the unity of the spirit in the bond  
of peace, and to be at one with  
the Father, and with the Son, and  
with the Holy Spirit, and with  
all the saints, and with the whole  
Church, and with the world, and  
with all creatures, and with all things.

Keep the God of love and peace  
that lead us out of all things  
our own confessions into truth  
our weakness and our infirmities  
us into paths of justice, peace, and  
love.

**Serious and Friendly**

**ADDRESS**  
**TO THE**  
**Non-Conformists,**  
**Beginning with the**  
**Anabaptists.**

**SIRS,**



**N**OW I am upon leaving  
the World by reason of  
Age; some reasons have  
prevailed with me to  
leave behind me for you,  
a few words, not of bitter Contention,  
but of Peace, and to Edification;  
and such only as are agreeable  
to a following the Truth in Love. And

**B**

**in**

in doing so, methinks I might promise my self, that what shall be thus offered, will with a like mind be pondered and weighed by all such among you as in whom passion, prejudice, and partiality, do not prevail more than that *wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable and easie to be intreated.*

How unfit soever I may in other respects be thought for this undertaking, yet my former experience in your way, and the many serious and impartial considerations I have had about it, may possibly have given me so much advantage for it, as may excuse my present undertaking. And besides, if he that *digged a pit* (Ex. 23. 33.) *was to cover it*; no man need to wonder if I concern my self more than many others, by endeavouring what in me lies, to Cure the almost Epidemical Disease of Schism in some, and to prevent it in others. For however the general prevailing of it seems to have worn out that sense of the hainousness of it which  
the



to the Non-Conformists. 3

the Church of God and all the famous Guides in it anciently had of it, and to have changed its name, and to be now adopted into the number of Virtues, and to be esteemed an Ornament among too many; yet I assure you it is not so with me, who have seen and observed the dismal effects of it. And doubtless it is not grown any whit the less hainous by prevailing so much as it hath done, unless a thing becomes the less evil by how much the more mischief it does.

This evil took place presently after the Reformation from Popery, and became a clog to it then, as it hath been ever since. And I know nothing so like to subvert the Reformation, and at last to deliver us up again unto a Papal Power, as this Sin of Schism.

Therefore blame me not if you find me endeavouring to awaken you into the same sense of it which I myself have. If you will but take your measure of what it is like to produce among the whole Protestant party in

the end, if a stop be not put to it, by what the divisions among your selves in the greatest part of your Congregations in this Nation hath brought forth, especially in the West; the prospect will be sad enough, and such as one would think should create in you a great jealousy touching the practice of separating from other Protestant Congregations. I should think it might well cause you to consider, whether those Sub-divisions, and sub-separations among your selves, do not befall you as a correction for your first dividing from others without a cause, and to awaken you to review the grounds on which it hath been done.

Now to convince you that you have no sufficient ground to separate upon account of *Infant Baptism*, and that you have great cause to repent that you have so done, is that I confess which I chiefly design in this Charitable Address, so far as it concerns you only.

You are wont to interpret the extent

to the Non-Conformists. 3

tent of Christs Commission to Baptize, by what is recorded in point of *fact*, touching who or what manner of persons were Baptized by the Apostles and others in their times: and to conclude that no Infants were authorized by that Commission, to be Baptized, since as you suppose the Scripture gives no account that any such were Baptized. But if this way of arguing were good, it would certainly make against your own practice, whether it make any thing against Infant Baptism or no. For then the said Commission of our Saviour would not warrant the baptizing of any such as you baptize, to wit persons at age, whose Parents were Christians when they were born, and who have been educated from their Childhood in the Christian Religion: for there is not the least hint in Scripture that any such were baptized in the Apostles days, nor of any (except Infants) but only such as were Converted from Judaism or Paganism, to Christianity, and that presently

after such their Conversion.

But if you think the lawfulness of baptizing such persons as you baptize, may be deduced by way of consequence from Christs Commission, though there be no instances in Scripture of the baptizing any such; Then you cannot deny it to be lawful to baptize Infants, if the lawfulness of it can be deduced from Christs Commission to baptize, though there should be no instances in Scripture of the baptizing any Infants. By this you see that your popular argument against Infant Baptism, falls foul upon your selves and your own practice. The difference then between you and the Pædo-Baptists, must not be decided by examples in point of fact, (though if it should, you would be far more to seek than they, as shall be shewed afterwards) but by the Doctrine of the Scriptures relating to Church-membership and Baptism, which we will now come to consider, and therein proceed gradually.

When any thing hath been wont to be

be argued from the Church-membership and Circumcision of Infants in Old Testament times, in favour of the visible Church-membership and Baptism of Infants now, and in favour also of the Nationality of Churches; it hath been still replied and urged by you, that there is this difference between the Church then and now, to wit, that the Church was Constituted then by *Natural Generation*, whereas it is Constituted now by *Spiritual Regeneration*; and further, that what was sufficient to make Church-members then, and to qualify them for the initiating Ordinance, is not so now. And because this is a Corner-stone in your building, a foundation principle, upon which both you and the Congregational men in great part do found your separate Congregations, therefore it will be very meet in the first place to examine what there is in this pretension.

That which is usually alledged for it, is *Rom. 9. 6, 7, 8.* where it's said;

*They are not all Israel which are of Israel: neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all Children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the Children of the flesh, these are not the Children of God, but the Children of the promise are counted for the seed.* However you may have flattered your selves from the meer sound of these words to think them a strong foundation for your aforesaid notion and opinion; yet being more narrowly looked into, they will be found to subvert and utterly overthrow it. For that which these words will directly prove, is, that Church-Membership or persons Relation unto God as his Children, did not, no not in Old Testament times, proceed from Natural Generation, or meerly from being *Abrahams* Seed, according to the flesh.

The unbelieving Jews, against whose pretences the Apostle here argues, did indeed hold, that because they were naturally descended from  
*Abraham,*

to the Non-Conformists. 9

*Abraham*, and Circumcised and kept the Law, that God should be unrighteous and not make good his promise, if he should not own them for his Children but cast them off, as the Apostle in his Doctrine it seems, asserted that he would, if they did not believe but reject the Gospel of his Son. And that upon which they built this confidence was, in that God had promised to be the God of *Abraham* and his Seed.

To take off which pretence of theirs, and to prove that God would act nothing contrary to his promise made to *Abraham* and his Seed, though he should reject them for rejecting the Gospel, he shews they were under a great mistake (just as you are now) in thinking they were the Children of God, or of his Church, meerly because they were descended from *Abrahams* Loins. For saith he, *they are not all Israel that are of Israel*, which yet they would have been, if somewhat else had not been requisite to make them so, than  
their

their procedure out of his Loins in a course of natural Generation. Neither (saith he) *because they are the Seed of Abraham, are they all Children*, to wit of God, as after he expounds it when he saith, *they that are the Children of the flesh, these are not the Children of God*, Ver. 8.

But as he shewed from what this Relation of Sonship unto God did not proceed, so he shews likewise from what it did, by interpreting those words of God to *Abraham*, but in *Isaac shall thy seed be called*. That is (saith he) *they which are the Children of the flesh, these are not the Children of God, but the Children of the promise are counted for the seed*. Now by Children of the promise is meant *Abrahams* spiritual Seed: for they we see are opposed to Children of the flesh: and spiritual and carnal are contra-distinquished, the one from the other, as Seeds of a different species or kind. This is so plain, as what can be plainer? So that in *Abrahams* time and after, we see, those who  
were



to the Non-Conformists. 11

were Related to God as his Church and Children, were so upon the account of their being *Abrahams* Spiritual Seed.

And furthermore, in that any of the Gentiles being profelyted to the Faith and Religion of *Abraham*, were with their Children to be admitted to the same priviledges with the people of the God of *Abraham*, and to be numbred with them as they were; it's a plain case that their Church-membership or Relation to God as his people, did not then proceed meerly from natural Generation and Relation, they being Children of *Abraham* not according to the flesh, but according to faith. The same may be said of Strangers from among the Gentiles, that were born of Gentile Parents in *Abrahams* House, or bought with his money, they being under his power to instruct and educate in the true Religion, the Males of them were to be Circumcised and received into the Church as *Abrahams* Spiritual Seed.

This

This being so, upon what account little Children were of the Church at that time, we will consider afterwards. In the mean time, methinks from what hath been now represented to you from the Scriptures, you should not but perceive that the Church was no more constituted by natural generation before the times of the Gospel, than it is since: And that therefore the spiritual Constitution of the Church under the Gospel, is no more an argument against Infants Church-membership, nor of the Nationality of Churches now, than the like Constitution of the Church in Old Testament times, was an argument against them then.

The next thing I would offer to your consideration is this, That notwithstanding that the Constitution of the Church in Old Testament times, was as well spiritual as that in the new, and did as well consist of *Abrahams* Spiritual Seed as the New Testament Church doth, and that there is no such difference between them

to the Non-Conformists. .13

as you have imagined : Yet for all that the *whole body* of the Jewish people in *Jacobs* Line, stood related to God as his Children and peculiar people. Before they were incorporated into a Common-wealth, and while they were as yet in *Egypt*, God himself stiled them collectively considered, *his Son*, *Exo.* 4. 22, 23. And afterwards to the whole body of that people, *Moses* said, *Ye are the Children of the Lord your God*. And again, *thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and he hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself*, *Deut.* 14. 1, 2. Elsewhere they are stiled *Saints*, *Deut.* 33. 2, 3. *Psal.* 89. 5. 7. & 149. 1. And *St. Paul* saith, that, unto them *pertained the adoption*, *Rom.* 9. 4. Now these several appellations, Children of God, holy people, Saints, peculiar people, signifie doubtless as much when applied to the Old Testament Church as when applied to the New, in the Epistles to the Churches. And therefore there can be no difference in the general

general nature of the Constitution of the one and of the other. Though there is a difference in the Revelation of the mind of God, and of the way of Salvation to the Church then and now, yet there is no such difference in their Constitution, as that the one should be called carnal, and the other spiritual: for as those of the Church of the New Testament are said to be *Saints by calling, holy brethren, Children of God, a peculiar people*, so were those of the old likewise.

Considering then that the Old Testament Church was Constituted of *Abrahams* Spiritual Seed as well as that of the New; and styled the Children of God, Saints, a holy and peculiar people, as those of the New Testament Church also are: One of these two things must of necessity follow. Either first that the whole body of the people of the Jews under the Old Testament, and all the people of the Churches of the New, who both came under the aforesaid denominations, were all savingly holy, and

no

no Hypocrites among them : or else secondly , That some people are in Scripture denominated Children of God, a holy People, Saints, a peculiar people and the like, in other respects than that of saving grace or internal holiness. And because we have no ground to believe that all those both of the Old Testament Church and of the New, to whom the aforesaid appellations are given, were savingly sanctified, savingly the Children of God, therefore we must of necessity conclude, that they were and are so called upon some other account that is more extrinsecal than that of special and internal grace.

And what that should be is not necessary for me to determine, it is enough to my purpose that it appears that the forementioned glorious appellations, are in Scripture given to some other, than such as are savingly sanctified. But yet that which seems to me most likely to be it, upon account of which others are stiled Saints, the Children of God and the like,

like, than those that are savingly so, is this, to wit Gods chusing, calling, and separating them from other people in the World, to be brought nearer to him than those others are, in relation, and in learning to profess the true Religion. And thus such are *Saints by Calling*, Rom. 1. 6, 7. of which I shall say more afterwards, and of the manner how. But thus there are *many called when but few are chosen*, as our Saviour hath told us again and again. Called, not only by being invited, but really brought to profess the true Religion, in the sincere belief and practice of which, Salvation is to be obtained; when yet they are not the chosen of God in that emphatical sense which is peculiar to those who are inwardly in heart and Soul, separated and devoted to God. Thus all and every one are Gods Sons or Daughters that are called by his name, as every one is that is called to profess his name and Religion. Isa. 43. 6, 7. *Bring my Sons from far, and my daughters from the*

*the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name.* And according to this account, and in this more general respect, persons very unworthy in point of life and practice, are Gods Sons and Daughters. *Deut. 31. 19. When the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons and of his daughters.* There are many that are Children of Gods Kingdom, that will be cast out into outer darkness, *Math. 8. 12.* St. Paul writing to all the Churches of *Galatia*, saith thus unto them, *Chap. 3. 26. Ye are all the Children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,* and gives this reason of his so saying: *For as many as have been baptized into Christ (as they all were) have put on Christ, viz.* by profession. And yet many of them were such as made him to write thus of them. *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you unto the grace of Christ, unto another Gospel, Chap. 1. 6. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed on you labour in vain, Ch. 4. 11.* And again,

*I stand in doubt of you, Ver. 20.* Much more of this nature might be said, and it might be further shewed also, that the holy Scriptures stile such Saints in this more general respect, and in a large sense, which were far from appearing to be so in the more special and emphatical sense. Instances of this nature might be given in Members of the Church of *Corinth*, and other Primitive Churches, as well as in the antient Jewish Church. Compare *1 Cor. 1. 2.* with *Chap. 5. 1.* and *8. 10, 11.* and *15. 34.* *2 Cor. 12. 20,* *21.* But I will not multiply words to prove that which appears so evident by a few as you see.

But if this be true which I have been proving, *viz.* That some in the visible Church are in Scripture denominated the Children of God, a holy people, Saints, a peculiar people, in other respects than such as amount to saving grace, or internal holiness; Then your principle and the principle of others in the *Congregational way*, cannot be found, when you and they



to the Non-Conformists. 19

they assert, *That none are to be owned as members of the visible Church, so as to be received into Church Communion, who are not in the Judgment of Charity, savingly sanctified.* For we see others than such are in Scripture account owned as really members of the visible Church. And therefore the opinion and practice both of you and them in this, can be no other than an *innovation and humane invention*, and which hath been one principal cause of so much division in the Church, and of the sad effects of it, as we have already seen. I have nothing to say against exercising as much Charity in your opinion of others as you can. But that's no judgment of Charity, nor of truth neither, to judg those no visible Church Members for want of saving Grace, which yet are so in the judgment of God himself by the Scriptures. And men should not pretend to be wiser than their Maker, or think to find out better methods than he hath pitcht upon, for the promoting his

ends, his own Glory and mans Salvation. But when they do, they lightly do in the total, and at the long run, but frustrate and disappoint those ends, or greatly hinder them, and promote those of a worse nature. The Judgment of Charity in this matter, is a rule arbitrary and uncertain, and will vary as mens opinions and affections vary, and he shall be a good Christian in the charitable judgment of some, that shall be denied to be so in the judgment of others. To set up this judgment of Charity for a rule in this matter, is indeed a way like unto which there is none that I can think of so prepared and fitted to make parties and Sects in the Church as that is. But to own all to be of the visible Church who are converted from a false to the profession of the true Religion, and the little Children of such, and the successors of such in the same profession, until they desert the Church, or are worthily and deservedly, and in a regular way of proceeding Excommunicated, is

to walk by an open, manifest, certain, and fixt rule; which had it been duly observed, would have preserved the Church in Unity and Peace, which now is lamentably divided and disturbed by introducing other measures. Which brings me to the next thing to be enquired into.

The next thing then which as I say we will enquire into is, how or in what respect little Children were members and a part of the Old Testament Church, and capable of the then initiating Ordinance. And by what hath been before proved, I think we may safely conclude, that it was not meerly upon the account of their natural descent from *Abraham*, or from *Abrahams* Seed, according to the flesh. For *Abraham* as he was Father to the Church or Church members as such, it was not in his natural but his religious capacity that he was so: it was as he was a believer, that he was and yet is the Father of Believers. And accordingly all that were of the Church, whether young or old, were

so upon a religious account in one respect or other. The Church is not a Natural, Political, or Civil Community, but a Religious or Spiritual Community: And therefore all persons, and so little Children that were of the Church, must needs in one respect or other have been persons of a Religious or spiritual consideration. This I think is past dispute. And yet I think that the little Children which were of the Church, could not be looked upon to be in that religious capacity actively, or by any act of their own while but little ones, but were passively such.

This considered, I know not upon what better to place the visible Church-membership of Infants, or to attribute it to, than Gods *electing and calling them to be his people, and their Parents dedicating and devoting them to God and his service.* First, God chose them to be his people among the rest. *Deut. 4. 37. Because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them.* This was the adop-  
tion

tion of which St. Paul speaks, *Rom.* 9. 4. Now Gods thus chusing them to be his people and declaring that he had chosen them (as he did in promising to be their God) was one degree of separating them from the rest of the World, and by which they became a holy seed, relatively holy I mean.

But this was not all: but they became his people by Gods *calling* them to be so as well as by his election and promise. The Lord by his Prophet stiled the whole body of the people of the Jews, *Israel my called, Isa.* 48. 12. By this call of his they were in a further degree separated to God as his people, and differenced from the Heathen Nations that were under no such call. Now God then calleth persons to be his people, when he placeth them in such circumstances, or vouchsafeth them such means, as by which they do or will come to take him for their God, and to embrace the Religion which is of God. Now as to the manner of this call, it is either extraordinary or ordinary.

As for *Abraham* himself he seems to have been called by God in a way extraordinary, by his *appearing and speaking* to him as he did in *Mesopotamia*, *Acts* 7. 2. But his seed and posterity were called in an ordinary way by being educated from their Childhood in *Abrahams* Religion by their Parents; deriving it from *Abraham*, and so successively from one Generation to another, from Generation to Generation, according to *Psal.* 78. 5, 6. *The Lord established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a Law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their Children: that the generation to come might know them, even the Children which should be born: who should arise and declare them to their Children, that they might set their hope in God.* And in this way the little Children who were then members of the Church as all confess, were called to that Church membership, unless you can suppose that any can be Members of the Church

Church without being called to it. And it was doubtless the Election and Call aforeſaid, by which little Children were brought into that ſpiritual relation to God and his people, which qualified them for a ſolemn admiſſion into the Church by the Church initiating Ordinance for the time then being, which other Children were not duly capable of who were not under that Election and Call. God's placing thoſe Infants in ſuch circumſtances as was their being under the care and tutorage of ſuch Parents, as would iſſue in their owning God for their God, and his Religion for the way of their worſhiping and ſerving him, was his calling of them in the beginning of it, unto ſuch a profeſſion. And the Scripture uſeth to reckon little Children as having begun to do this or that, when they are but placed in circumſtances that will bring them to do it actually in the Iſſue. And thus the Children of the *Robabites* of a month old were numbred with their fathers as with them keeping  
the

*the charge of the Sanctuary*, when they were but in a way of being trained up to it, *Numb. 3. 28.* And in this respect perhaps it was that our Saviour spake of some little Children as believing in him, of which I shall say more afterwards, *Mat. 18. 6.* And for the same reason it may be little Children were said to enter into Covenant with God when their Parents did so, *Dent. 29. 11, 12.* To conclude this enquiry; Most certain it is, that Infants were then received into the Church and were a part of it, as all acknowledge; and it must be in the respects which I have mentioned that they were so, unless any more likely can be named, which I cannot imagine. For other Infants of the Heathen which were not under these circumstances, were not reputed Church Members, nor were in any immediate capacity of the Church initiating Ordinance.

The next thing after this which would be enquired into is, whether the visible Church membership of the Infants



Infants of believing Parents, was *discontinued* or terminated by the taking place of the Gospel ministration, or by any new Church state under it? And I doubt not to say, that there are many things which will determine this question against you in the Negative. I will begin with that in *Rom. 11. 29.* where it's said, *for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.* These words relating to the calling of such Jews who as concerning the Gospel were then Enemies for the sake of the believing Gentiles, and yet beloved for the fathers sake, that which I chiefly note from them is, That the calling of God, or his ancient way or method of bringing the Jews to be his people, is not now under the Gospel recalled, no more than his *donation* or *gift* conferred on *Abraham* and his Seed, is, when he promised to be their God on the terms he did, but both are still continued without any repentance in God. The way into the Church is as open, the terms of admission as touching

touching the general nature of them as easie, and the means of procuring it vouchsafed by God, as sufficient now as ever they were. God hath not repented of any favour or grace that was antiently granted to the Jews whether old or young, in reference to their being of his Church and People. And in that very prediction in *Isa.* 59. 20, 21. which the Apostle here in *Rom.* 11. 26, 27. recites, touching the calling of the Jews in Gospel times, it is foretold, that the same way of propagating Church-members and the true Religion, which God used in old Testament times, by Parents training up their seed in the true Religion, and by that means transmitting it from Generation to Generation, shall continue in the Church to the end of the World. For it is there said, *As for me this is my Covenant with them, saith the Lord, My spirit which is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed,*

*seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seeds seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.* And accordingly we find in point of event, that (except in the first planting of Christian Churches in an extraordinary way, by extraordinary means) the ordinary way of propagating the Christian profession and professors from age to age, hath been the very same with that which was used by Gods appointment by the Jews of old; which was by receiving their Infant Children into the Church, and so educating them in the true Religion professed by the grown members of the Church.

For further light in this matter, let us consider what doctrine our Saviour taught, and what his Apostles after him, in relation to it. Our Saviour saith, *Suffer the little Children to come to me and forbid them not; for of such is the Kingdom of God, Mark 10.14.* Which words, for of such is the Kingdom of God, are the reason here given by our Saviour, why little Children

Children should be suffered and not forbidden to be brought to him. Which shews, that when he says, of *such* is the Kingdom of God, he meant it of such little Children properly as those were which were brought to him, and not of men like little Children, in humility, innocency, or docility, as you would have it. For if we should understand it in your sense, then that which our Saviour gives here for a reason, seems to be no reason. For what consequence is there in this, or how would it follow, that because the Kingdom of God is of other persons like little Children in other things, but altogether unlike them in what was the matter of exception against their being brought to Christ, which was their minority, that therefore little Children properly meant, ought to be suffered and not forbidden to be brought to Christ? And if it be meant of little Children properly, then our Saviour in these words asserts such little Children to be of the Church, whether  
you

to the Non-Conformists. 31

you understand by Kingdom of God, Heaven it self, or the Church on Earth. For none are of the Kingdom of Heaven above, who are not first of the Church on Earth; for it is his Body the Church only that Christ is thus the Saviour of. But if this Text were to be understood in your sense, yet it would prove that for which I alledg it, by parity of reason. For if that which makes adult persons like little Children in that for which they are propounded as a pattern, will qualifie them for the Kingdom of God, then it must needs qualifie the Children themselves for it. If you say that this way of arguing as well proves Doves, Lambs, and Sheep qualified to be of the Kingdom of God, as little Children; because they in some respects are set for patterns unto men, and good men upon account of resembling them in some respects, are called by their names. I answer, it follows not; because these Creatures have not rational natures  
as

as Children have, and therefore are not capable of spiritual benefits as Children are : Nor were ever constituted Church-members heretofore as little Children have been. By reason of which difference, it will not follow that the one are not Church-members because the other are not, though both are propounded as patterns in some respect of that which will qualifie rational Creatures for Church-membership. So that take it which way you will, the argument from the Text for Infants Church-membership, is far stranger than any thing which can be offered against it.

Again, in *Luke 9. 48.* Our Saviour speaking of a little Child which he had set by him, saith, *Whosoever shall receive this Child in my name, receiveth me.* Here you have no room to pretend it meant of men qualified like Children. For it is not said, whosoever shall receive *such* as this Child in my name, but whosoever shall receive *this* Child (the individual

to the Non-Conformists. 33

dividual Child then set by our Saviour) in my name, receiveth me. And if that Child or other such were to be received in the name of Christ, then that Child was, and other such are spiritually related to Christ, as those of his body the Church are: how else could they be received in his name? Now to receive one into the Church of Christ, is to receive one in his name, therefore since our Saviour would have some little Children received in his name, he would have them received into his Church. The words, *whosoever shall receive this Child in my name, receiveth me*, are indefinite and not limited to any one way of receiving in his name. So that if there should be more ways of receiving little Children in the name of Christ, than by receiving them into the Church, yet that being one way, and an eminent way too, it cannot according to Christs own Declaration, but be highly acceptable to him to receive such little Children into the Church as that he spoke of

D

was,

was, since he takes it as if he himself were received.

Let us consider yet further those words of our Saviour, *Mat. 18. 6. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, &c.* If I can demonstrate to you that this was spoken of little Children properly, I shall not need to determine in what respects they can be said to believe in Christ. I can easily think as well as you, that they cannot be said to believe in the properest sense. They are not indeed unbelievers, as that signifies a wilful rejection of the terms of Grace and Salvation, which yet it may be is the common sense of the word unbelief in Scripture, which is damning. And considering their redemption by Christs Death from Condemnation for original sin, while actual is not added to it, they may be as well in a state of Salvation, as actual Believers are, till actual sin take place; and so be numbred with them upon that account. When our Saviour says, *Whosoever doth not receive*



*ceive the Kingdom of God as a little Child, shall not enter therein*, it is not only implied that little Children receive the Kingdom of God, but also more fully express, that none shall receive the Kingdom of God but upon the same terms in some sort as they do, and what can those be but Christs Ransom and Purchase, and their being free from a prevailing principle of opposition against the Gospel and Government of Christ. And that may well be true in this case which our Saviour says in another, *He that is not against us is for us*, Lu. 9. 50. and if little Children in such a sense are for Christ, they may well be reckoned to be of his party, and called as those of his party are, Believers, Disciples.

The little Children of old, could no more properly enter into Covenant, nor the *uncircumcised male Child break the Covenant*, nor the Children of the *Kohathites of a month old keep the charge of the Sanctuary*, than little Children can believe in Christ:

and yet in some respect, and in such a latitude of speech as the Scripture sometimes useth, they were said to do all these things. Let the reason then be what it will for which they are said to believe, yet that it is some little Children properly taken, who in this place are said to believe in Christ, I shall endeavour to evince by shewing these two things.

First, That they were little Children in a proper sense of which our Saviour spake, *Ver. 5.* in the words next preceeding these in *Ver. 6.*

Secondly, That these in this *6. Ver.* who were said to believe in Christ, were the very same, or the same sort of little ones of which he had spoken in *Ver. 5.* That they were little Children in a proper sense of which our Saviour spake in *Ver. 5.* when he said, *Who so shall receive one such little Child in my name, receiveth me;* will appear, partly by the relation these words bear to those which go before; and partly by comparing them with the relation which another

ther Evangelist makes of the same matter. In the 2. Verse of this Chap. Christ is said to set a little Child in the midst of his Disciples. And in the 4. Ver. he saith, *Whosoever shall humble himself as this little Child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.* This little Child in ver. the 4th. is the same with that said to be set in the midst of the Disciples ver. 2. And then in ver. 5. he saith, *Who so shall receive one such little Child in my name, receiveth me;* meaning such little Child as had been spoken of just before in ver. 2. and 4. And to put the matter out of all doubt, that by such little Child mentioned ver. 5. our Saviour meant that very little Child that was set by him, or any other such, and not men resembled by the humility, docility, or innocency of that or any other such Child, the Evangelist Luke relating the same matter, Chap. 9. 48. saith thus: *Whosoever shall receive this Child in my name, receiveth me;* plainly speaking this of that individual

dual Child, which in the very next Verse before, Christ is said to have set by him. The true sense of the same matter related thus by both the Evangelists, seems to be this, That whosoever should receive that little Child, that very Child which Jesus had set by him, or any other such, in his name, should by so doing, receive him. The one Evangelist relates one, and the other the other part of our Saviours saying in this matter; as is usual also in other Cases.

Thus far the matter before us is as clear as well could be desired, that when our Saviour said, whoso shall receive one such little Child in my name, receiveth me, he meant it of little Children properly. And that it was these very little ones so understood, or this sort, which our Saviour said, *did believe in him*, when he said, *but whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, &c.* seems to be as plain as the other. For to whom can those words, *one of these*

*these little ones*, relate, but to them of whom our Saviour last spake? Besides, the opposition here between receiving and offending, the receiving one of those little Children in Christs name, and the offending of one of those little ones, shews the matters spoken of in both *verses*. 5. and 6. to respect the same sort of persons, which then must needs be little Children properly. And the opposition seems to ly thus: as he whoever he be which shall receive a little Child in Christs name as related to him, or so as to educate and instruct him in the knowledge of him and his Religion, shall do a worthy act, such as Christ will take as if done to himself: So he that shall turn one such little Child aside, by training him up in a contrary Religion, shall do a most unworthy act, and such as would expose him to worse than being drowned in the depth of the Sea. And this sense of the word *offend*, exactly agrees with the common use of it in the New Testament.

But yet notwithstanding all that I have said, I do not at all deny the emblematical use here, of the little Child which our Saviour set in the midst of the Apostles, which was to cure them or some of them of ambition, and to perswade them to become if possible as free from it as little Children are. And therefore tells them first, that except they were converted and became as little Children, they should be so far from being greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, the thing they contended about, as that they should not at all enter therein, *ver. 3.* And secondly, he tells them, that the way for them or any other to interest themselves so far in his favour, as to be made greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, is by becoming like little Children, by purging out such ill habits of pride and the like, which made them unlike to little Children, in whom such ill habits had not taken place. For saith he, *Who so shall humble himself as this little Child, the same is greatest in the*

*the Kingdom of Heaven, ver. 4.* But then though all this is granted, yet it must be considered, how and after what manner our Saviour would cure this distemper in the Disciples, by this emblem of a little Child. And this he did, first by intimating to them how free from pride and other ill habits little Children are, till they have defiled themselves with actual sin. And secondly, by letting them know how very dear to him they are upon that account, upon their not having actually defiled themselves with pride, malice, or opposition against him and his Gospel (for which reason perhaps he numbers them with those that believe) indeed so dear, as that he takes what is done for or against them, as done for or against himself. And by thus discoursing to them of such little Children as that was which stood in the midst of them, he instructed them touching the necessity of purging out ill habits, and of becoming humble and innocent, if ever they would endear themselves to him,  
or

or become capable of entering into the Kingdom of Heaven, or of being great therein.

By the way then, by what hath been now said, you may answer your own argument, why you cannot think it probable that any little Children were said to be baptized, when it's said, such and such were baptized and their Households. Your reason you know is, because it is said of some of them, that all of those Households did believe. Which yet is no reason to disbelieve little Children to be any of those *all*, if the little Children of Believers are said by our Saviour to be Believers, as you may see they are, by what hath been now represented to you, unless better reason can be offered against the sense argued for, than what is offered for it.

**T**HUS far we have heard what our Saviour hath said touching the  
 conti-



continuance of little Children in the visible Church under the Gospel: Let us now hear what his Apostles say. In the first Sermon they preached after they had received the Holy Ghost, St. Peter used this as a motive to those Jews who had Crucified Christ, to repent and be baptized for remission of sins; for saith he, *the promise is to you and to your Children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call, Act. 2. 38, 39.* This clause, even as many as the Lord our God shall call, shews that which I have been proving, to wit, that the promise of spiritual benefits or priviledges, was not made to *Abrahams* seed meerly upon account of their relation to him according to the flesh, but as they shall be his spiritual Children in deriving from him the profession of the same Faith or Religion which was in *Abraham*. And so and upon these terms the promise was made to the Jews here spoken to as bad as they were, and to all afar off, whether Jews or Gentiles, upon suppo-

supposition of their being called, and not to them only, but to their *Children also*. Now I have shewed before, that the little Children in the Jewish Church, could not have been of it no more than the Children of the Gentiles, but by being some way or other *called* to it, as they were whom God put under the nurture of believing Parents, or Tutors, and upon those terms the Gentiles Children might be of the Jewish Church too, as the Children of the Strangers that were born in the House of him that was a Jew, or bought with his money, were. By this part of *St. Peters* Sermon you may see, that under the Gospel, the promise continued to all such as were called, both of Parents and Children, just as it was before; I mean as to spiritual priviledges. The promise now is to as many both Parents and Children as God shall call, and it was no otherwise before. The Apostles words here run but according to the tenour of the promise of old, and according to what was  
enjoyed

enjoyed in old Testament times, both by Jews and Proselytes, and their Children. The Proselytes from among the Gentiles upon their being called, were of old *grafted into the stock of Israel, and their Children with them, and did partake of the root and fatness of the Olive Tree*, as the Apostles phrase is: that is, they were partakers of the same spiritual priviledges as *Abrahams* spiritual Seed were. Thus the Proselytes were then, and the believing Gentiles under the Gospel were no more: they were but grafted into the same stock or Olive Tree, *i. e.* into the same Church, *Rom. 11. 17.* I say into the same Church, for that continued still, though not all the same Laws, and was constituted of *Abrahams* spiritual Seed as before it had been. Which brings me to the next thing I would call you to the consideration of.

When *St. Paul*, in *Rom. 11. 20.* speaking of the unbelieving Jews, saith, *because of unbelief they were broken off*, it doth appear thereby, there

there was no discontinuance of the Church by any change made by the Gospel upon its first entrance. This is implied when it's said of some Jews that they were *broken off*. For it was the Church, the same Church from which they were broken off, of which they were branches or members, until they were broken off. But then the Church it self remained still in being at that time when they as branches were broken off, and after also, into which others were grafted. The case was plainly this. Before Christs appearance in the flesh, the Jews generally both better and worse, professed a belief in Gods promise of sending the *Messias*, and that he should be of *Abrahams* Seed, in which Seed all Nations were to be blessed. By profession of which faith, or this and the Religion of *Abraham* otherwise, they were all externally *Abraham's* Spiritual Seed, and as they were his Spiritual Seed, they were the Church of God. When the promised *Messias* was come, and the promise,

mise thereby fulfilled, and a new Revelation made touching his being come, and that Jesus the Son of the blessed Virgin was he : some of them believed this and so kept their standing in the Church, in as much as by that belief they continued to be the Spiritual Seed of *Abraham*, as they were before by their former Faith. Whereas the other Jews who did not believe this, but opposed the profession of it in those that did, ceased thereby to be so much as nominally, or by profession the Spiritual Seed of *Abraham*, and so became broken off from the Church, being now his Seed but after the flesh only. This which is indeed the plain truth, and easie to be understood, is point-blank against your contrary opinion and assertion, on which you much build, touching the dissolution of the Church which had been Jewish, when the Church as Christian did commence. The belief of a new Revelation, did not make a new Church, but the Church in being before, had thereby

thereby a new illumination, and their faith changed into a belief, that that now was done, which they believed before would be done. The Church, considered as well before as after the entrance of the Gospel into the World, is resembled by one standing Olive-Tree that had some branches broken off and others grafted in.

And as the same Church continued under the Gospel which did exist or was in being before, so the very same Church-members kept their place and standing in it which were of it before, except such as were broken off by *unbelief*. And if so, then those little Children which were of the Church immediately before their Parents became Christian, did not cease to be so by their Parents becoming such, nor by any alteration which the Gospel made. For if those who were broken off, were broken off by unbelief, according to the Apostles express assertion; Then unless those little Children I speak of, were guilty of unbelief in themselves, or  
had

had it imputed to them from their Parents, they could not be broken off, but still kept their place and standing in the Church of God. But guilty of unbelief by imputation of it from their Parents, they could not be, for they were Believers. Nor could they be any more guilty of it by any act or omission of their own, than they were while as *Abraham's* Spiritual Seed they were of the Church before. And therefore the only reason and cause of the dischurcing of those who were dischurched; not being found in those little Children, they could not possibly be dischurched by any alteration which the Gospel made.

You may further observe, how that such expressions are used in the holy writings of the New Testament, as do denote the Children of believing Parents to be *holy*, to be separated to God now as well as they were in old Testament times. Thus when the Apostle speaks of the Hebrew Christians and their Seed, of which the Christian Church was first constituted

as the *first-fruits unto God*, and how it was like to continue as the *root or stock* into which the believing Gentiles in part were already, and were further to be grafted, he saith thus in *Rom. 11. 16. If the first-fruits be holy, the lump is also holy, and if the root be holy, so are the branches.* In old Testament times if the root were holy, if the Parents *Abraham's* Spiritual Seed were holy, the branches their little Children were holy also, as coming under the same denomination with their Parents. And we here see the Apostle asserts the same thing to be now, and to take place under the Gospel dispensation. He doth not say in reference to times past, if the root *were* holy, so *were* the branches, but with reference to the time present, if the root *be* holy so *are* the branches.

And as here *St. Paul* speaks of the Sanctification of the Seed of the Hebrew Believers, so elsewhere he asserts the sanctification of the Children of the believing Gentiles, when he saith,



to the Non-Conformists. § 1

faith, *The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your Children unclean, but now are they holy*, 1 Cor. 7. 14. If we should read this Text according to your interpretation of it thus; *else were your Children Bastards*, but now they are *Legitimate*, we should impose such a sense upon the Apostles words, as would represent him as speaking untruly. For certainly the Children of Heathen Parents born in lawful Wedlock, were no Bastards, although the Parents were neither of them Believers, nor neither of them sanctified by faith, or by means of the faith of the other. Whereas the holiness of the Children here spoken of, did depend upon the faith of one of the Parents: if one of them had not been sanctified by means of the faith of the other, their Children would have been unclean, and yet not Bastards neither, provided the Parents were lawfully Married before either of them believed. If then your it-

terpretation be not the true sense of the Text (and you see for what reason it cannot) then what can so reasonably be assigned for it, and so agreeably to the current tenour of the Scriptures, as those Childrens being separated together with their Parents, from Heathenism to Christianity, from Idols to God, from being without God and Christ in the World, to be related to him as members of his Church, chosen and called out of the World, by which they became *relatively holy*.

Unto all that hath been already said, let us add in the last place, that little Children together with their Fathers, are expressly called Disciples, *Acts 15. 10.* Where it's said, *Why tempt ye God to put a yoke upon the neck of the Disciples, which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear.* That which is here called a putting a yoke upon the neck of the Disciples, was the urging the necessity of proselyting the believing Gentiles with their Children by Circumcision, after  
the

the manner of *Moses*, ver. 1. Now the manner of initiating Proselytes of the Gentiles according to the Law of *Moses*, was to Circumcise the Father and his Male Children too, if he had any, *Exod.* 12. And therefore the Children of the believing Fathers as well as their Fathers themselves, must needs be understood to be those Disciples upon whose necks this yoke was endeavoured to be put. This being the plain and genuine sense of this Text in all probability, I must needs say it is but a faint put off and weak evasion to escape the force of the testimony given in this Text to the Discipleship of some Infants, for you to alledge that it was the *doctrine only* of the false Teachers imposed upon the Parents and other grown persons, who only and not their Infants were able to understand it, that was the yoke, the only yoke that was endeavoured to be put upon the neck of the Disciples here, and that therefore they only must be here meant by the Disciples upon whose neck the yoke

was endeavoured to be put. For this Doctrine of false Teachers, was no further a yoke or burden, than as it referred to the thing thereby urged to be practised. The yoke or burden which St. *Peter* a Jew here saith, neither they nor their fathers were able to bear, was the pain they underwent in being Circumcised, and the costly Sacrifices and other external burdensome observances which by the Law of *Moses* was laid upon them: and this really, or Circumcision which was a part of it, was the yoke or burden which the false Teachers would now have imposed upon the believing Gentiles and their Children, as necessary to Salvation. And this was that which St. *Paul* also called the *yoke of bondage*, wherewith he would not have the Believers *intangled again*, Gal. 5. 1. Which did not consist only in doctrine: for he presently by an instance shews what he meant by it and wherein it did consist, saying, ver. 2. *Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised Christ shall profit*

*profit you nothing.* And the like he had done before, *Chap. 4. 9. How turn ye again to the weak and beggerly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage;* instancing wherein in the next words: *ye observe days, and months, and years.* This yoke of bondage then we see, did consist in more than meerly doctrine. The neck of the Disciples must needs be the neck of all those who were to have born the yoke according to the Law of *Moses*, if they had been obliged by it, as the false Teachers pretended they were: and such were Children of eight days old, who among the rest were to have been brought under that yoke, had the false Teachers prevailed. To restrain then the sense of the word *yoke* to doctrine only, when as the thing urged by that doctrine, was the yoke which the Children were as much to bear as their Parents, is as I said but a weak evasion. I deny not but that adult persons are primarily meant and intended by Disciples in this place:

but that they only were so with exclusion of little Children, is that which you will never be able to prove, since it's certain that the false Teachers did no less impose the burden of Circumcision upon the Children than upon the Parents. Though it's true they began with the adult, and the dispute lay between the adult and them: for they could not impose upon the Children, but by procuring the Parents\* to accept of the imposition, both for themselves and for their Children. In that Infants are not in an immediate and the most proper capacity to learn of Christ, makes you think I suppose that the Scripture should not call them Disciples: But that need not make it incredible to you, when you consider what I have already shewed, and need not here repeat; How that little Children in Scripture account, are esteemed to be or to do this or that in a religious respect, when yet they are but first put into a way, or but brought near a proper capacity of being

ing or doing it ; when they are but placed in such circumstances as will issue there, and which makes it visible to men that they will do so. How else should little Children be stiled Believers, and be said to do several other things every whit as remote from their capacity in the properest sense, as their learning of Christ is ? I could shew I think by many instances in Scripture, that things are said to be, or to be done when they are but visible in their foundation or cause.

Thus (to give you one instance) our Saviour said of the family of *Zachens*, *This day is salvation come to this house, for as much as he also is the son of Abraham*, Lu. 19. 9. The name of the effect is given to the visible cause ; Salvation is said then to be come to the family of *Zachens*, because he himself being become a Son of *Abraham*, would in all probability be a means of bringing his Household to be so too. Besides, in Scripture account, as are the Parents,  
so

so are their little Children reputed to be. If the Parents are counted *the seed of the blessed of the Lord, so are their off-spring with them, Isa. 65. 23. Psal. 37. 26.* If they are called from the rest of the World into a near relation to God, as his special or peculiar people, or to be his *Disciples* (which is but another name for the same thing, *Isa. 8. 16.*) so were and are their Children with them. And in some sort they are accounted to do that in their somewhat remote religious Progenitors (much more in their immediate Parents) which they did. And thus *Levi paid tithes in Abraham, Heb. 7. 9.* And when our Saviour said whoso should receive one of those little Children, he spoke of, in his name, would receive himself; it is intimated that in doing so, they should receive such Child as specially related to him as Disciples are. And to receive them in his *name*, and to receive them as his *Disciples*, seem to be two words signifying but the same thing, as appears by comparing *Mark*



9. 41. with *Mat.* 10. 42. Where both express the same thing in different phrases. That which one calls a giving to one a Cup of water in *Christ's* name because he belongs to Christ, the other calls, a giving it to one in the name of a Disciple. And to receive little Children into the Church of Christ (which is one way of receiving them in his name) which is his Family, is to receive them as Disciples or Scholars into his School, as designed by him there to learn his Doctrine, which may well give them the denomination of his Disciples. And the account which I have now given why little Children are called *Disciples*, may serve as reasons also why they are said to *believe* in Christ.

**H**AVING now heard what doctrine our Saviour himself and his Apostles after him have taught concerning the little Children of believing Parents, and in what visible state they

they stand in relation to Christ and to his Church, I think you will find little room left for you so much as but once to imagine that the Gospel when it took place, put a period to the visible Church-membership of Infants.

Let us now consider from what hath been said, in what capacity such Infants stand in reference to Baptism. And can any man that doth consider them, *forbid water that these should not be baptized?* If such Infants are as much of the Church, and as much *Abrahams* spiritual Seed, as ever Infants in the old Testament Church were, then they can be no more incapable than they were of a solemn admission into the Church by the Ordinance of initiation for the time being, as Baptism is now, as Circumcision was then. That which qualifies any for visible Church-membership, certainly qualifies them for Baptism. *All were baptized into one body* that were of it, 1 Cor. 12. 13. And such Infants can be no less capable of the  
 spiritual

spiritual ends of Baptism now, than they were of the spiritual ends of Circumcision then, which were, and which are, much-what the same. And if it be so acceptable a thing to Christ for us to receive one such little Child in his name, as that he takes it as well as if we received Him, nay takes himself to be received in our so receiving it (which could not well be if it were not a member of his body the Church) can you then think it a thing displeasing to him to baptize such in his name, when as that is a sacred Rite appointed by him for a solemn receiving such in his name into his Church, as do belong to him, as doubtless such Infants do, or else they could not be received in his name? And when Christ hath given Commission to disciple all Nations and baptize them; can you fancy that the same Commission implies a prohibition to baptize little Children though they are *Disciples*? If little Children are made Disciples in their Parents being made so, and that in  
Gods

Gods account and by his appointment, then to baptize them certainly cannot be a deviation from Christs Commission to baptize Disciples. And lastly, if our Saviour hath said it of some little Children that they believe in him, then the same Commission which authorizeth the baptizing of Believers, must authorize the baptizing of them. The Commission is general to baptize Disciples indefinitely, and therefore must needs extend to all that are so, or that are Believers, though but in the lowest sense. These are no forced, or far fetcht consequences, but flow naturally from their premises.

And whereas the Scripture speaks of Baptism as the Sacrament of Regeneration or new Birth, which you make as an argument against the administration of it to Infants, by reason of their incapacity for Regeneration: you should consider first, that Circumcision was a Sacrament of Regeneration as well as baptism is, and yet Infants were not incapable of it  
upon

upon any such account. Circumcision in the Letter, was a sign of spiritual Circumcision, of that made without hands, the Circumcision of the heart, and was a Seal of the Righteousness of Faith. And what thing more spiritual than this, is I pray you signified by Baptism? Which considered, the spirituality of baptism in nature or use, is no more an argument against Infants capacity for Baptism, than the spiritual use of Circumcision was an argument against that. And this is sufficient to take off your argument.

But you may consider yet farther, that Infants even while such, must needs be capable of Regeneration in one sense or other; unless you will say they are not in a salvable state, which yet you have not been wont to say; or else that unregenerate persons may go to Heaven and be saved, contrary to that of our Saviour, *Job. 3. 3. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* And therefore you seem to be under a necessity

cessity of granting Infants to be capable of Regeneration in a sense more or less proper. And if you think Regeneration most properly and strictly taken to be incompetent to an infant state, as Regeneration signifies that new state into which a person is brought by a change in the frame and temper of the mind and will, and by a regulation of the motions and operations of the Soul in reference to their several objects; then you must be constrained to accept of another sense of Regeneration, and such as is more competent to an Infant State; unless as I said you will say, that persons may go to Heaven in an unregenerate State. Now there-

Dr. Ham-  
monds An-  
not. Mat.  
19. 28.

fore since the word translated *Regeneration*, according to the assertion of learned men, and the reason and nature of the thing it self, doth properly signify a *new or second state*, it follows, that if it can be proved that Infants are brought into a new or second State; or capacity of being happy, other

other than what is natural to them as deriving from *Adam* or their immediate Parents, which is called a being *born of blood* (*John* i. 13.) then they may be said to be in a regenerate state. And that the whole Race of *Adam* are put into a *new state* or capacity for happiness by the second *Adam* after they had lost it by the first, until they fall into actual Rebellion against God by actual sin in their own persons (of which sure they are in no danger while they are but in their infant state) may I conceive be sufficiently evinced from *Rom.* 5. 18. where the Apostle says, *as by the offence of one Judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto the justification of life.* And the same might be backt by many other Scriptures. And it may well be that it was in respect of this new state into which little Children are brought by Christ the second *Adam*, that our Saviour said, *of such is the Kingdom of God.* Now so far

as Baptism signifies our Communion in the virtue of Christs Death and Resurrection by which our *state* is changed, as well as our conformity to it by a moral change in our *nature*; there is in Infants, or conferred upon them, that spiritual grace which answers the outward sign in Baptism. And that such a change of condition as to be raised out of a state of death into which we were brought *for sin*, into a state of life by *forgiveness of sin*, by virtue of Christs Death and Resurrection, is called a being *quickened together with him*, as well as that moral change which is made by sanctification, is a thing which seems fairly to lie in those words, *Col. 2.13. And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.* And let me say this further, that it seems not improper neither to say, that Infants are dead to sin, to actual sin in their own persons, in as much as we cannot say, *that lust hath conceived*  
in



in them so as *to bring forth sin* by any consent of will : though it's true they are not dead to it as having mortified it, they having not yet, while Infants, contracted any ill habits to mortifie. So that as burying with Christ in Baptism signifies a death unto sin in the person baptized, there is in some sort that in Infants which answers the outward sign in baptism in that respect also. These things considered, you may well infer, that if that *new state* into which Infants are brought, be in some respect a new birth, a birth from above, and such as puts them into an immediate capacity for Salvation, as well as Regeneration, in the common acceptation of it, does the adult ; (and you see by what reason you are perswaded to believe it is) then you have as great, yea greater certainty of the regenerate state of Infants in this sense, than you have of the regenerate state of any adult persons, in the other notion of Regeneration ; and consequently a more certain ground to

baptize them, so far as Regeneration in a person is a reason or ground of baptizing him, than you have to baptize the adult.

Considering farther that the words of our Saviour's Commission did run in general terms to disciple all Nations and baptize them; how can you think that the Jews or the Apostles themselves could understand otherwise thereby, than that the Children of the converted Gentiles and Jews too should with their Parents be received as Profelytes to the Christian Religion and as such baptized, unless they had had caution to the contrary; which if they had, there would have been no place for controversie in this matter. The reason of the unlikelihood of their understanding otherwise, is taken from a usage among the Jews, by which they did initiate Profelytes both Fathers and Children from among the Nations of the Gentiles, by *baptizing* as well as *circumcising* them. A thing which is acknowledged by the more learned among

among your selves; and which you may find recited by several of our English Authors out of the writings of the ancient Jewish Doctors, as by *Dr. Hammond* for one in his *Annotations* upon *Mat. 3. 1. John 3. 5.* See also *Ainsworth* on *Gen. 17. 12.* The reception of the Profelytes into the Church in this way, the Jews esteemed a *new birth*: unto which our Saviour seems to refer in his discourse with *Nicodemus*, when he said, *except a man be born again of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God, Jo. 3.* And when *Nicodemus*, grossly mis-understood our Saviour, and demanded how can these things be? our Saviour replied and said, *art thou a master in Israel and knowest not these things?* As if he should have said, is this any such strange thing which is so like what is familiarly practised among your selves? This considered, they by Christs commanding them to Disciple or Profelyte all Nations baptizing them, could not well under-

stand but that they were now to go abroad into all the World to Proselyte the Nations to Christianity, and to enter them in the Christian Church by Baptism, both Parents and Children, like as now and then a family of them had been formerly Proselyted to the Jews Religion, and received into their Church. And accordingly the recorded instances in Scripture of persons baptized that had Households, makes it probable in conjunction with other circumstances, that when the Father or chief of a Family was converted to Christianity and baptized, his Household was baptized also, as it had been before practised in the reception of Proselytes. Of all those in Scripture who by name or personal description are said to have been baptized, there are but nine so far as I remember, besides our Saviour; to wit, *Simon Magus*, the *Eunuch*, *Saul* called *Paul*, *Cornelius*, *Lydia*, the *Taylor*, *Crispus*, *Gaius*, and *Stephanus*. The Eunuch had no Children, and was baptized upon the  
road.

road. *Paul* had none not being Married. Whether *Simon* had or had any Household, is not said. And whether *Gains* at that time had any Household when he was baptized, is uncertain. But the other five of the nine who had Households, their Households came into the Church with them by Baptism, as the Households of the Proselytes formerly had done. If then we may make a Judgment of what was usually done, by so many instances in Scripture as we have of what was done in this Case, we shall not want reason to incline us to think, that when the Apostles did baptize any that had Households, that it was their usual practice to baptize all those also that were of their Households, except such as *rejected the counsel of God against themselves, and were not baptized*, which little Children could not do. It was not without its signification, that of old the great promise of Grace to the World by the *Messias*, was made to Families, *in thy seed shall all the families of the earth*

*be blessed* : as if Gods design signified thereby, was to bring the Nations of the World into the Church by Families, as the event shews he hath done for the most part, both before and since the Gospel dispensation. The Profelytes of the Gentiles of old as well as the Jews, came in by Families : and we see by the instances before-mentioned, that the Christians came in by Families, and were baptized by Families also. And the Church hath been stockt by Families, and the Christian Religion transmitted down from Age to Age, from Parents to Children, and from Masters to Servants.

• It will seem the less strange to you, that when the Father of the Family was converted to Christianity, his Household was brought into the Church with him, if you consider upon how small appearance of becoming Christians, adult persons were baptized and received into the Church in the Apostles days, and by them. When we read in *1 Cor. 8. 7. 11.* that such as *unto that hour continued to eat of the Idol sacrifice*

*sacrifice with conscience of the Idol*, are yet called *brethren* though weak brethren indeed, you may easily guess upon how little appearance of Christianity, persons were received into the Church; and so you may by the baptizing of *Simon Magus*, and many others that soon proved great scandals in the Church, by whom the way of truth was evil spoken of. When in the same hour of the night in which St. Paul preached the Gospel to the Jailer and his Household, they were all baptized, they did not long stand Candidates for Church-membership, nor could attain to much knowledge in the Christian Religion into which they were baptized. No doubt but the door into the visible Church is far wider than the gate of the Church as invisible, and of the Kingdom of Heaven. I do not find that any were refused that were willing presently to be baptized, how bad soever they had been before or proved to be after, no not *Simon Magus* himself, than whom there could hardly be a worse,

But

But then it must be remembred, that Discipline was appointed for the cure of distempers in the Church, and for the purging it of the notorious scandalous members.

These things I have the rather mentioned to render it the more probable that little Children were baptized where whole Houſholds were baptized, when there were any ſuch in thoſe Houſholds. For if adult and grown perſons were baptized and received into the Church upon ſuch eaſie terms as I have ſhewed they were: if they were baptized when there was but any fair probability that they would own the Chriſtian Religion for the future, though but by ſo little appearance of ſuch a thing as was viſible in ſome of them when they were baptized; Then it is not unlikely but that they might baptize ſome little Childrea alſo, concerning whom circumſtances conſidered, there was every whit as great a probability that they would own, profeſs, and aſſert the Chriſtian Religion



gion for the future, as there was that their Parents would : in as much as Parents still use to educate their Children in the same Religion which they themselves profess.

Unto all which let me add this further ; That the Judaizing Christians who contended with the believing Gentiles for not observing the Law of *Moses* in Circumcision, meats, and days, never that we find quarrelled with them for not entering their Children into the Church, as by the Law of *Moses* they were to do when they themselves were received as Proselytes, nor for not baptizing them according to the custom of the Jews, both in reference to their own Children and the Children of Proselytes. Nor do we find that the unbelieving Jews ever contested with them for any such thing, though otherwise they were forward enough to lay hold of any thing they could to object against them. All which still renders it probable that there was no such thing wanting in the believing Gentiles,

Gentiles, as might give either the Judaizing Christians or unbelieving Jews any occasion for such a quarrel, which otherwise we may well think would have risen among them.

But leaving these things, suppose it were granted you (which yet will not be) that the Scripture were wholly silent as to matter of fact touching the baptizing of Infants in the Apostles days; yet when we find in Scripture sufficient reason why they might and should have been then baptized, it may well induce belief that they then were and now may. We do not find as to matter of fact, that any of six of the seven Churches of *Asia* were baptized, nor of some other Churches of the Apostles planting: but yet that's no good argument that there was none, so long as there is ground enough to conclude that they ought to have been baptized, for that they were a part of that one universal Church that hath *one baptism* belonging to it for the solemn incorporation and initiation of all its members,

members, of all that are qualified for Church-membership. We do not read in Scripture that the Jews baptized the Profelytes, both Fathers and Children, when they received them into the Church, and yet we are otherwise satisfied that they did. So that you see it can be no good argument that Infants were not baptized in the Apostles days, though it should be supposed and granted that we have no record in Scripture that they were. I have told you before, that if this way of arguing were good, it would oppose and run down your own practice as much and more than Infant Baptism. Because there is nothing at all recorded in Scripture as to matter of fact, that gives the least hint that any were baptized at age whose Parents were Christian at their birth. So that either the baptism of Children is recorded in the recording of the baptism of Households, or else the baptism of none is recorded in Scripture but of such who immediately before their being baptized, were converted

verted from Judaism or Paganism: I mean as to what was done after Christs Resurrection. This argument from matter of fact I know hath taken much with people of weak minds, who cannot see *a far off*, as St. Peter speaks in another case, and hath furnished your Congregations with Proselytes to your way; but doth indeed wound your cause, and gratifieth none but *Socinians* in their opinion that none ought to be baptized but such as are newly converted to Christianity from another Religion.

And it is not a thing to be slighted in reference to this matter of fact, That Authors of good credit in the antient Church, who lived in times not far distant from the age in which the Apostles or one of them lived, did assert Infant Baptism to be an *Apostolical Tradition*, and to have been received from them and practised in the Church from their times downwards, as many Books before you have made it appear. And that which yet adds the more credit to their testimony is,

in that they were never contradicted in this their report and testimony by any that lived in the same age with them or near to it, no not by *Tertulian* himself, though otherwise in reference to his opinion, of all sin past being wash'd away by Baptism, he would have had it deferred, except in case of danger of death in Infants, not only till persons were past Childhood, but till after Marriage and the heat of youth was over, if not till old age or towards the time of death. Neither could ever any Advocate of your cause so far as I can learn, give any account short of the Apostles times, of the first rise of Infant Baptism.

But not example in matter of fact, but the reason and ground on which they stand or do depend, is our rule. And therefore the reason and ground from Scripture why some Infants may be baptized, I reckon is more to be attended to than the evidence of fact. And these I have laid before you already and shewed; That the reason

reason of allowing the visible Church-membership of some Infants, is the same now as it was in old Testament times; such as is Gods chusing them to it, sanctifying and setting them apart for it, and calling them to it. That Gods gift in granting this privilege in the days of the Patriarchs, and his calling them to it, is *without repentance* and unrepealed. That they are as much qualified for the Church initiating Ordinance now as ever heretofore, and as capable of the ends thereof. That our Saviour hath owned their special relation to him by appointing them to be received in his name. That he hath acknowledged them to be of the number of those that believe in him. And that our Saviour and his Apostle hath put them into the number of Disciples. That they are in a sense in a regenerate state. All which together, plainly show them to be qualified for Baptism, according to the very Letter of Christs Commission. And if there be substance in these reasons,

to the Non-Conformists. 81

sons, as I doubt not but there is, Then Infant Baptism is far from being a *Nullity*. And whatever I have said heretofore in times long since, contrary to the tenour of these reasons, I hereby *Revoke*, and do think I have given you sufficient reason for my so doing, and for every one of you to do so likewise.

Considering then what lies in your way, you will find it a difficult task to satisfy your selves (or to give others any tolerable account that you can satisfy your selves) that Infant Baptism is a *Nullity*. And it is so much the more unreasonable for you to think that it is, when yet those who have been baptized in their Infancy, do agree with you in the doctrine of baptism, touching the nature and necessity of it, and the reasons and ends of it; and hold themselves as much obliged by it, as you do by yours: and the sincere of them do as well and as much perform their obligation, as those among you do who are sincere.

G

And

AND if these things be so as I have endeavoured to represent them from the Scriptures; and if Infant Baptism be indeed no Nullity: Then so many of you must needs be under a dangerous mistake and guilty of the odious sin of Schism, who think it a sufficient ground to separate from Christian Congregations, for that they have not been otherwise baptized than in their Infancy, and which deny Church Communion with them to be lawful for that reason, and practise upon it accordingly. For this is a *Causeless and unwarrantable rent and breach made in the body of Christ the universal Church*: which is *Schism* in the formality of it. Nay it is Schism of a higher nature than ordinary. The Schism in the Church of *Corinth*, and the like in other Churches, which was so much condemned in the Apostles Epistles, as that scarce any thing was more, was but a proud, uncharitable, and unpeaceable faction, and siding in a particular Church,



Church, which did not proceed so high as to separation of one part of the Church from the other in publick worship and Church Communion. Nor was such a thing at all practised then by any Christians, upon any occasion, though there were great disorders among them, but only by such as St. Jude saith, *were sensual not having the spirit, ver. 19.*

And if Schism was so highly condemned when it never rose to that height among Christians as to deny Communion one with another in the publick worship to be lawful: What can we think of such a Schism then as for you *without cause* to deny the lawfulness of holding Communion with almost all the Churches of Christ in the World (except those few Congregations which have been rebaptized) and to practise accordingly; not to mention your censuring them to be no true Churches, nor any member of them properly a Christian, but people of the World? If the little Schisms in the Church which never

proceeded to separation, were thought of such ill consequence by the Apostles, as that they laboured hardly in any thing more in their Epistles, than to prevent and suppress them: Then certainly such a Schism as yours, cannot in reason but be of as much more a criminal nature, and of so much worse consequence, as the unchurching of almost all Christian Churches in the World, is worse than those lesser divisions in the Church were; notwithstanding which they kept on foot their Communion in the solemn worship. The Schism which consisted in separation we see was perpetrated by none then but those vile *Gnosticks*, who though they pretended to more knowledge and perfection than was in them they withdrew from, yet such was the opinion the Apostles had of them and their separation, as that they were not afraid to say, they were *sensual not having the spirit*. Which I note, not as judging you to be as bad men as those *Gnosticks* were, (setting

ting aside your Schism) but to put you in mind that notwithstanding the great disorders that were in those Churches, and the want of the due exercise of Discipline in the Church of *Corinth*, and several of the seven Churches of *Asia*, yet no good Christians then ever attempted to erect separate Communities for reformation sake, much less were ever encouraged so to do by the Apostles, but the quite contrary.

Now if the Apostles had such a deep sense of the mischievous nature and effects of Schism, as put them upon such strenuous endeavours to prevent or suppress it, as we find they used: Methinks this should awaken you to reflect upon your selves and what you have done by your separation, in making such a rent as you have done in the Church of God, and what the effects of it have been.

I know you cannot be without all sense of what sad effects our Church divisions have produced; Such as is the exposing of our holy Religion,

to the scorn and contempt of Atheists, Infidels, and Papists, and the tempting of those to become such which were not so before: and such as is the discomposing, unsettling, and confounding the minds of many well meaning, and well-designing, but injudicious people, to the betraying them into the hands of Seducers, who have made their advantage of our divisions: and such as is the diverting of mens minds from the serious consideration, study, and practice of the weightier matters of Religion, and the engaging them in contentious Janglings, and uncharitable Censurings and Revilings, to the destruction of true Christian Charity and Piety, and the placing Religion much in opinion, and in being of a different form and party; and such as is the exposing of us all to the danger of the breaking in of Popery, by strengthening their hands who are of that way, and by weakening our own, and by encouraging them in hopes of prevailing at last to practise upon us,  
and

and by all their Arts to improve the advantage we have put into their hands by our divisions and distractions. You cannot be ignorant how many have taken their way to *Quakerism* and *Scepticism* through your Congregations; like *wandering stars*, having first left the Parochial Assemblies, have promised themselves this and that satisfaction, first in one new form and then in another, until they have run themselves out of breath, and at last quite lost themselves and seldom returning.

And if upon review and examination you find, as doubtless you may, that your separation, which with the separation of others, hath brought forth such bitter fruit, hath proceeded on mistaken grounds, and been undertaken without any just cause: what work then will here be for repentance, that ever you have been necessary to such mischiefs as those before-mentioned are, and what need is there for you that are Leaders, to sound a *retreat* to your followers!

I can assure you it hath been matter of no small humbling to some, when they have perceived the bad effects of such separation, that ever they had their hands in it; The sense of which bad effects also, first put them upon such a serious review of the grounds on which they first set out in it, as by means whereof they came to discover the weakness and unsoundness of those grounds. And as what I have herein done to help you to a sight of your mistake, is intended as a real service to you; so I ought to presume that it cannot but be judged to be so by such as are sincere lovers of truth, if they can receive thereby any such benefit as is designed them by it.

And if any shall receive conviction, and yet for their reputation sake among their party, and for fear of the reproach of inconstancy, shall still persist in their way contrary to the conviction of their own mind; let them consider, that such will hardly be able to *buy* the *truth* with the price  
of

to the Non-Conformists. 89

of liberty, estate, or life, that are scared from a publick owning of it, by the corrupt breath of such injudicious and heady persons, which cannot excuse them by answering for them to God, to whom every one must give an account for himself. Let it be remembred, who and what they were who *believed on Christ*, and yet would not *confess* that they did, because *they loved the praise of men*, of their own party, *more than the praise of God*, *Joh. 12. 42, 43.* and who they were that *could not believe*, because *they sought honour one of another, and not the honour that comes from God only*, *John 5. 44.* I the rather mention these things to you, because I know in part how strong a temptation of this nature is, and how hard to be overcome. But let it be considered, that it is not counted a disparagement to any man that he is not infallible, when as it is truly dishonourable for any to carry it as confidently as if he were, when almost all knowing and  
good

good men in the World, are of another mind. It is in the Judgment of the wisest, truly commendable and praise-worthy, for a man to acknowledge and retract his error when he is convinced of it. If this should not be admitted, what place is left for men to grow in knowledge, or to perfect that which is lacking in their repentance, which is not done without a change of mind? There are few men that arrive at any great wisdom, but have found occasion to alter their opinion in many things.

There is another principle of separation besides this of Infant Baptism, which is common both to you and those of the *Congregational way*: and though you differ in the former, yet in this you are one. This principle of separation consists in an opinion, *that none are to be held Communion with in Church-fellowship, who are not in the Judgment of the Church*



*Church savingly called and savingly sanctified*: which you and they call a *Judgment of Charity or of discretion*. This is an opinion, and the practising upon it a thing plainly contradicted by the testimony of the Scriptures, both in the old Testament and the new. This I have shewed already in this discourse. And to what I have already said, I shall add one or two things more. The one is, that herein you and they take upon you to judge in matters, wherein you neither are nor can be competent Judges. He that judgeth a man to have saving Grace or not to have it, must pass a Judgment of what is in the heart and not of his outward actions only. And this is the Prerogative of God only, who as the Scripture saith, *only knows the hearts of the Children of men*, 1 Kings 8. 39. and therefore may not be usurped by men. It's true indeed we may and must judge the best of men with a Judgment of Charity so far as there is any ground to hope well of them in  
reference

reference to their state Godward ; but we must not take upon us to judge in the *Negative*, against men in the worse sense ; that is, that they have no saving Grace, or which is the same, that they are in a damnable condition, except they have those black Characters on them, for which the Scripture expressly excludes them from having *any inheritance in the Kingdom of God and of Christ*, such as are enumerated in 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10. Gal. 5. 19, 20, 21. We may judge of mens declared principles and actions in order to their reception to, or rejection, or at least suspension from the Communion of the Church, when we may not judge of their state Godward. A man may be so scandalous as for which to be deprived of Communion with the Church, when yet we may not judge that man to have no Grace. *If any man obey not our word by this Epistle, note that man, and have no company with him that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy but admonish him as a brother,* 2 Thes.

3. 14, 15. The reason of all which I have signified already, which is, because we are incompetent Judges in this, at least unless they are monstrously wicked persons. The parting difference between the lowest degree of saving grace, and that which is but common grace is so little, and to the wisest of men so undiscernable, that it is impossible but that they will be in great danger of judging them to have no saving grace that have, who sit in Judgment upon that matter: Yea and of depriving them also of those Church priviledges which according to your own tenent they have a right to, having saving grace. And thus in going about to weed out the tares, *you will root up the wheat also*, contrary to the mind of our Master. *Mat. 13. 29.* When our Saviour saith, *judge not that ye be not judged, Mat. 7. 1.* as he would not have us severe in judging other mens words and actions, or intentions, so much less their state and standing before God. *Who art thou that judgest another*

*ther mans Servant ? to his own Ma-  
ster he standeth or falleth, Rom. 14. 4.  
And again, who art thou that judgest  
another, Jam. 4. 12. St. Paul saith  
of him that is a Jew, not outwardly  
but inwardly, and whose Circumcision  
is not outward in the flesh but in-  
wardly in the heart, That his praise  
or approbation is not of men but of  
God : it is not of men decisively or  
determinately, but of God only who  
knoweth the heart. And if it be not  
of men, then men should not attempt  
it or undertake it. Rom. 2. 28, 29.  
That's one thing.*

Another which respects those of  
the Congregational way chiefly, is  
this : That their practice in pursuance  
of their principle aforesaid, is con-  
trary to the constant practice of the  
Apostles and Primitive Christians.  
We do not find, that they refused any  
adult persons Communion with them  
in the Supper of the Lord, who had  
been received into the Universal  
Church by Baptism, but only in case  
of being orderly proceeded against in  
a way

a way of Church censure for notorious scandalous offences: but that such as were baptized *continued stedfastly in the Apostles doctrine, and in breaking of bread and prayer, Acts 2. 41, 42.* And the Profelyte strangers of old who were Circumcised, were by Gods appointment admitted to the same Church priviledges as the Jews were, *Exo. 12. 49.* Whereas those of the Congregational way, though they baptize their Children, yet refuse them Church Communion when they are grown, if they have any strong suspicion that they have no saving grace, although they never came under Church Censure for notorious scandalous offences. Which is an Arbitrary and unscriptural way of proceeding, and so much the worse in them who scruple some things because not commanded in Scripture, though they be not forbidden. So that their foresaid principle of separation in Conjunction with their practice of baptizing their Children, renders them inconsistent in their way, and  
their

their way contradictory in it self.

There are further great inconveniences, to say no worse, attending this practice of theirs. First, they have hereby prepared a way to Anabaptism, and give occasion for many to take their way to that throughth eir Congregations, as *taking a degree* towards it there. For when some have perceiv'd the interferings that are in their way in baptizing persons into the Universal Church, and yet not to receive them into their particular Churches, nor permitting them Communion with them therein when come to Age, notwithstanding their profession of the Christian Religion, but upon a new account of special grace; they have been thereby drawn to think the Anabaptists more true to their principles than they, and that then the baptizing of persons may be as well deferred till they have special grace, as their particular Church-membership may, and so upon that account among others, have gone over to them.

Secondly, hereby some who may  
have

have no saving grace, are in great danger of being betrayed into self flattery, and into a being confident that they have, because so good and knowing a Congregation as they esteem such a Church to be, hath judged that they have; and so rest secure in an unsafe condition. Which made several of the New-England Ministers after their long experience of the effects of this way, at last in their joint answer to Mr. Davenports *Apologetical Preface*, p. 43, 44. to say thus: *Indeed when men confound these two, and do tie visible Church-membership unto such conditions and qualifications, as are enough to salvation: this may tend to harden men and to make them conceit, that if they be got into the Church, they are sure of heaven; whereas alas it may be they are far from it.*

Thirdly, A guiltiness of a great Schism in the Church, and consequently of the many sad effects of it; some of which I have mentioned before. If the separation built upon  
H the

the principle under consideration, had been matter of duty by vertue of that principle, they that have engaged in it would not have been accountable for the evils consequent upon it, no more than they were of setting Father against Son, and Son against Father, Mother against Daughter, and Daughter against Mother, by preaching the Gospel, *Lu. 12. 53.* But whosoever hath undertaken a separation from, though but part of the Church, upon insufficient grounds and mistaken principles, must be accountable for the ill effects and consequences of it, until they repent and leave off, as well as for the Schism it self which caused them. But now I have already represented to you, why a Judgment in the Church that persons have not saving grace, cannot be the rule of non-admission of them to particular Church Communion, supposing them to have been baptized into the Church Universal: and I have shewed likewise how that in the account of Scripture, such have been



been visible Church-members, and externally related to God and to Christ, and called by his name, and denominated Saints, upon another account than that of saving grace or internal holiness. Which if truly represented, then it cannot be matter of duty but the contrary, to ground a separation from such Congregations as are constituted upon other terms, and because they are so.

In that those of the Churches mentioned in Scripture have been stiled Saints, it is no argument why none are to be admitted to Church-fellowship but such as are Saints in a saving sense, though this principle of separation I now speak of, is wont to be grounded on that. For some in those Churches which were not Saints in that sense, were yet stiled Saints from their being separated and set apart to own and profess the worshipping of the most holy God only, and to be of his holy Religion, as I have shewed both in this discourse and elsewhere more at large. Saints then was the

common appellation of those that profess the Christian Religion, as Christian is now: and was not then used to discriminate the sincere from the unsound Christians, as it is now. This was a device of a later date, and is too like that of the Church of *Rome* which does appropriate the honour of being Saints unto such only as they esteem to have been eminently Religious. The conclusion then is, that if the separation of these friends with that of your own, be unaccountable from the Scriptures, then they and you must needs be accountable for it, as an unlawful and naughty Schism, and for the many evils produced by it, until pardon be obtained by repentance, which none can promise themselves, but upon reformation.

**T**HE last thing I shall observe from the foregoing discourse, is, that it doth afford us a substantial ground

ground for *National Churches*: That is, it affords us ground to conclude, that the whole body of a Nation who are baptized into the Universal Church, and that profess Gods true Religion, are in that respect *subject matter* of a Church; though this is indeed a thing which lies cross to your thoughts, and which you are wont to oppose with some indignation. The whole body of the Nation of the Jews, as was shewed before, were by Gods call and their profession, *Abrahams* Spiritual Seed, and as such were *Church matter*, and a Church *inorganically* considered. And for the same reason if the whole body of a Nation now by Gods call and their profession of the true Religion, become *Abrahams* Spiritual Seed in a sense, they must needs be as well *National Church matter*, as the Nation of the Jews were.

Now that other Nations which have profest Gods true Religion, have thereby become *Abrahams* Spiritual Seed in a large sense as well as the

Nation of the Jews ever were, we have good reason to believe, not only from the nature of the thing it self, but also from the Scriptures. *The Lord said unto Abraham, My Covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many Nations: a father of many Nations have I made thee, Gen. 17. 4, 5.* Which is not to be understood in a restrained sense, of his being a father of many Nations *by natural generation only*, but also if not only of his being a *spiritual father* of many Nations, who were to derive their being, and what they should be in a spiritual or religious capacity, from him from whom the true saving doctrine hath been since propagated; first, to the Nation of the Jews, and then to Nations of the Gentiles. And thus *St. Paul* interprets the aforesaid promise of God to *Abraham, Rom. 4. 16, 17.* ---- *That the promise might be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, as it is written,*

*written, I have made thee a father of many Nations.* Now if *Abraham* be, hath been, and shall be, a spiritual Father of many Nations, then many Nations must needs be his spiritual Children: For Father and Children are correlative, and in what sense the one is a Father, the other must be his Children. And when *St. Paul* saith, *if ye be Christs, then are ye Abrahams seed* (*Gal. 3. 29.*) is true of all that are so, and in the same sense in which men are Christs, in that sense they are *Abrahams Seed*, whether it be by profession only, or by a sound Faith also.

And in correspondence to all this, *the Kingdoms of this World are said to become the Kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ.* Which must be understood of their becoming professors of the Gospel of Christ or the Christian Religion, *Revel. 11. 15.* And this hath come to pass according as was foretold by the Prophets as well as to *Abraham* himself. To instance in one instead of many, *Zech.*

2. 11. *Many Nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people.* As the Nation of the Jews were Nationally Gods people, and God was the God of Israel; so here it's foretold, that many Nations nationally should be joined to him and be his people also, and consequently he must be the God of those Nations in the same sense in which they are his people.

Thus far the matter is so evident, that one would think that nothing but an inveterate prejudice and prepossession of a contrary opinion unduly taken up, and an averseness to confess your selves to have been mistaken, should hinder you from accepting of a conviction in this matter, and of yielding up your judgments as conquered by the truth. To proceed then yet farther. If Nations professing the true Religion, are in a more general sense *Abrahams* spiritual Seed, and a people joined to the Lord so as to be his people, Then it is as well the duty of the people of  
such

such Nations to associate and knit together in Christian Congregations for publick worship in the places where they reside, as it was for the Primitive Christians who lived in *Rome*, in *Corinth*, in *Cenchrea* by *Corinth*, &c. to associate as they did in the same places for the same end; and accordingly those Churches were called by the names of the places where they did reside. And our Parochial distribution is no more a cause of quarrel, than that was that the Church of *Corinth*, and the Church at *Cenchrea* were distinct upon the *only account* that the members of each lived in distinct places. And as the distribution of the whole Nation of Professors of Christianity into particular Parochial Assemblies, best answers the *Primitive pattern*, so it best answers the *ends* of Church association, such as are the watching over, conferring with, admonishing, exhorting, and comforting one another, and the assembling together for publick worship,

And

And when the Christians in a Nation are thus disposed of into Congregations in the places where they live, weak and strong together, it is no ways agreeable to primitive practice, nor to the general ends of Church association, nor to the common good of particular Churches, or of the whole body of Christians in a Nation, for the stronger, the wiser, the better, the more spiritual in those Parish Churches, to withdraw themselves from the more ignorant, weak, and carnal Christians, residing in the same place with them, into distinct and separate Communities, so long as they can hold Communion with them without sinning in so doing. This the Primitive Christians did not: and if no such thing had been done in our Nation, the Church of God amongst us would doubtless have been in no such bad circumstances as now it is.

As God hath placed in the natural body members some more necessary and useful than others, to be helpful and serviceable to the meaner, more  
helpless



helpless and less useful, for the good of the whole body: so it is in Ecclesiastical bodies. *God, saith St. Paul, hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked; that there should be no Schism in the body, 1 Cor. 12. 24, 25.* That there should be no Schism in the body: as to be sure there will and needs must, when that part is most neglected which lacketh most care and pains, and withdrawn from as if it were no part of the body. This becomes a sore temptation to those who are despised, to set against those who despise them, and that again tempts them on the other side, to oppose their opposers, and so the breach grows wider and wider, and spreads it self through the whole body of a Nation. And as the withdrawing live coals from those that are but a little kindled, is the way to put out the fire: so is the withdrawing of the better Christians from the worse, not in a way of Church Discipline, but into distinct bodies,

bodies, the direct way to ruine the Church, and to extinguish the life and heat of Religion in those places where this is practised. I nothing doubt but that those who have taken this course, let the provocation to it be what it will, might have consulted the real and true interest of Religion in the main, much better in another way. This way savours too much of self-satisfaction, and neglect of others, to be of Christ, who would have the *strong to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please themselves, after his own example, Rom. 15.* New ways many times take much for a while which do not end so well at last. *Enquire for the old way and stand in the good way,* that in which the primitive Christians walked, if ye would find rest and satisfaction in your own minds, rest to your Souls.

And if it be matter of duty in it self, and according to primitive practice for all Christian Professors in a Nation thus to unite in particular  
Congre-

Congregations in the places where they reside, and not to make any Schism after, by one part withdrawing from the other into separate Communities, so long as they can continue their Communion without a necessity of sinning; Then if the Higher Powers in such a Nation do exercise their authority in commanding them to do this which is of it self their duty, though they had not commanded it, and do likewise forbid and restrain their making of Schisms by separating when they have no sufficient or warrantable cause to do it; this cannot make it less their duty than it was of it self before, and still would be, were there no such Command or restraint from the Higher Powers. No man sure can imagine that if *Nero* had used his authority in commanding the Primitive Christian Churches to do the same things which they were obliged to do though he had not commanded it, as he did not, that *Nero's* Command in that Case would have made it any  
whit

whit less their duty, but the more.

It is not unbecoming but very laudable no doubt for the Higher Powers to concern themselves and their authority in promoting the Christian Religion in their Dominions, by taking order that God be publicly and solemnly worshipped by the Christians in the use of Gospel Ordinances: That places for publick worship be provided for that end: That Officers competently qualified, be appointed to administer those Ordinances: That fitting maintenance be appointed and provided them, that they may attend that work without distraction: That the people be required and commanded to attend the publick worship, and that care be taken that they may not be disturbed in it: and finally that Discipline be duly exercised for the purging of the Churches, and for the keeping them pure. Supposing the Higher Powers and the people of a Nation to be Christian, the very *light* of nature, and their *love* to the Religion they profess, will

will dictate such things as these, in the one to Command, and the other to obey, and to use all due means to prevent divisions amongst them, as being most destructive to all Communities of men, and to the flourishing of Religion.

I do not find that in the Law of *Moses*, there was any direction or command in particular, that when that people should chuse them a King, that he should use his authority in causing both Priests and people to do their Duty in the several parts of Gods Worship, enjoined by *Moses* his Law, any more than Kings now under the New Testament are in particular appointed and required to see that the Christians under them, both Ministers and People, do their duty in matters relating to Gods publick Worship. And yet when *Hezekiah*, for instance, to restore Religion after a decay of it in his Dominions, commanded the Priests and Levites to do the duty of their places according to the Law of *Moses*; and with advice  
of

of the Princes, summon'd the People of the Land to come and keep the Pasover, and the like : in the Conclusion it is said thus of him. *Thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was right and good, and true before the Lord his God : and in every work which he began in the service of the house of God, and in the Law, and in the commandments to seek his God, he did it with all his heart and prospered,* 2 Chro. 31. 20, 21. And if this and the like in other good Kings was highly acceptable to God, as we see it was ; then we have little reason to think it should be displeasing to him when Kings now do any thing like it. *He is the minister of God to thee for good,* saith St. Paul, Rom. 13. 4. and so long as he promotes the publick good in things temporal or spiritual, Civil or Ecclesiastical, he is not out of his way. If it were a thing so well pleasing to God for *Abraham* to command his Children and his great Household to keep the way of  
the

the Lord, as that God himself applauded him for it, *Gen. 18. 19.* it cannot certainly be an offence to him for Kings to command their Subjects to do likewise. It was no small blessing that God promised to the Church when he said, that *Kings should be their nursing Fathers, and Queens their nursing mothers*: and it would be great ingratitude not to acknowledge it to be so, when they use their power and authority, not only to protect and encourage them in the profession of the Christian Religion, but also in making provision as Nursing Fathers for their spiritual nourishment, *Isa. 49.* And the truth is, the more the Higher Powers concern themselves in due ways to promote Religion in their Dominions, the more usually it flourisheth: as we see not only by examples in the Scriptures and other History, but experience teacheth us that there is generally the least face of Religion in such places as have been most neglected in the publick provision.

I would advise those among you who are most tender in this point touching the Magistrates Power in matters of Religion, to hear what is said in answer to a Question of this Nature, by J. O. in some Sheets intituled, *Two Questions concerning the power of the supream Magistrate about Religion and the worship of God; with one about Tythes, proposed and resolved*: Whose words I know they will more regard than anothers. The Question is, *Whether the Supream Magistrate in a Nation or Commonwealth of men, professing the Religion of Jesus Christ, may or ought to exert his power Legislative and Executive, for the supportment, preservation, and furtherance of the profession of the faith, and worship of God; and whether he may and ought to forbid, coerce, or restrain such principles and practices as are contrary to them, and destructive of them?* The Answer to which, is managed under ten Heads of Arguments. The affirmative (saith he) of both parts of this Question is proved,



proved, 1. From the light and Law of Nature. 2. From the Law of Nations. 3. From Gods Institution in and by Laws positive, upon Doctrines of faith and ways of worship, of pure Revelation. 4. From the example of all godly Magistrates accepted with God from the foundation of the World. 5. From the promise of Gospel times. 6. From the equity of Gospel rules. 7. From the confession of all the Protestant Churches in the World. 8. From the confession of those in particular, who suffer in the World, on account of the largeness of their Principles, as to toleration and forbearance. 9. From the spiritual sense of the generality of godly men in the World. 10. From the pernicious consequences of the contrary assertion. This was good Doctrine in 1659.

And if upon apprehension and experience, such Higher Powers do judge that all the Christian Ministers and People in their Dominions, are never like to prove so wise and sober, as not to abuse an absolute liberty,

by making *different parties* in the Church, by chusing *different ways of administration*: and if to prevent this, and to preserve Peace and Unity in the Church, as of great concernment for their edification and comfort, and for the honour and reputation of the Christian Religion, and for the better propagation of it, they have thought it best to prescribe some method and form to be used by all, it is to be seriously considered by you, That if nothing in that method and form be enjoined you as a condition of Communion, which is not sinful for you to submit to, Then which is most eligible, whether to separate, or to submit to that method and form, though it should not, in your apprehension, be so useful, beneficial and grateful to you, as a liberty for you and your Ministers would be, to use what way you liked best? If you say, to separate is most eligible and fittest to be chosen in this case: Then you must prove that which no man will ever (I think) be able to do, to wit,  
That

That it is lawful to break Churches to pieces upon the account only of some conveniencies you desire, and inconveniencies which in your apprehension you suffer, when otherwise you might lawfully and without defiling your selves with sin, continue and maintain your Communion in those Churches, to your own and their edification with whom you were united. No doubt but the great differences that were on foot between the Judaizing and Gentile Christians in the Apostles times, did somewhat burden their Communion together in the same Church, with some considerable inconvenience; and so did the scandalous opinions and practices of many in the seven Churches of *Asia*, and other Churches, make the Communion which those had with them who had *not defiled their garments*, the less pleasant and comfortable, and in some respect burdensome to them. But we hear nothing of separation and breaking of Churches in pieces upon that account, nor of any en-

I 3

courage.

couragement given thereto by the Apostles, but the quite contrary.

To bring this business down from above, let us try it a little in your own Court. Suppose the Higher Powers should not have concerned themselves in prescribing any Common form to be used in all particular Churches in their Dominions, but had left them all at liberty to do that which should be right in their own eyes. And suppose again that any other Ecclesiastical Power over the whole should have thought fit to have prescribed the same Form for all the Parish Churches which now is prescribed by the Higher Powers in this Nation, or some other as dissatisfactory to some. Nay to go lower, suppose yet further, that the several Parishes or particular Churches had not been under any such general Ecclesiastical Power, nor ruling over the whole neither, but each particular Congregation had been under its own Government only. And suppose in this case, that the ruling, prevail-  
ing,

ing, or major part in one or more such Independent Congregations, should have thought it fit to have such a form used in their own Congregation as is now prescribed by our Higher Powers, or should have done or caused to be done in the publick administration, something else as unacceptable to part of such a Congregation as the form now prescribed by our Higher Powers, is to you. Yet the question would still be, which would have been most Christian in either of these Cases, whether to divide, separate, and break the Church to pieces, or to submit to the use of it to avoid such a breach, and the bad effects of it, until they could in a peaceable and regular way, have obtained their desire, or come to better satisfaction in their own minds? Supposing still that all this while, the dissatisfied part had been put upon doing nothing sinful in it self, but only what was less useful and desireable in their own apprehensions. And if you allow of separation upon any account

less than that of necessity when men must sin or separate, or an utter failure in the means of edification, you open a door to confusion in, and destruction to the Church. It is upon this very account of necessity that we justify our separation at first from the Church of *Rome*. Now if such things as now supposed, did proceed from any other Church Governing Power, were it indulged to by the Higher Powers, would be no good ground of separation, neither then can they be any, when they proceed from the Higher Powers. For let them proceed from the one or the other, it doth not alter the nature of the things themselves, otherwise than as the stamp of authority may make that in some degree necessary in *use*, which was and still is but indifferent in its own nature, and might have been used, or another in the stead of it.

Now see then where you are, and to what you are brought. If you cannot prove that to join in the publick

lick worship of God administred according to our Liturgy, is a Sin; then if you refuse to do it, and separate from the Church because of it, you make yourselves guilty of as great a sin as the monstrous effects of an unlawful Schism and separation argues it to be. And you cannot prove that your joining in the publick worship administred by our Liturgy, is a sin, unless you can prove that something therein appointed for the publick worship, and which you must join in, if you join in the publick worship at all, is contrary to some institution, rule, or Precept of our Lord and Saviour, which I presume you will never be able to do. And the reason is, because the things for which we pray therein, and for which we give thanks, are agreeable to the Scripture; they are *prayer, matter, and thanksgiving matter.*

And then for the external circumstances of Form and Method, you cannot prove these unlawful, because it is no where forbidden in Scripture

to present your prayer, matter, or thanksgiving matter to God in such an external form and method as is used in the Liturgy, but rather countenanced therefrom, as by our Saviours directing his Disciples to use a Form of Prayer, and by the forms of Prayer in the Psalms composed to be used as Prayers. The title of *Psal. 102.* is this; *A prayer for the afflicted when he is over-whelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord.* The title of *Psal. 90.* is this; *A prayers of Moses and the man of God.* The 72. Psalm ends thus; *the prayer of David the Son of Jesse are ended.* Hezekiah the King, and the Princes, commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David and Asaph, 2 Chron. 29, 30. The Scripture hath no where determined, whether Prayer shall be made with the use of a Book or without, or whether longer or shorter, or whether in our publick Devotions, one or two, or more shall be used, or whether all shall be pronounced by the Minister only,



only, or part by the people also. We do not count it unlawful to pray to and praise God with united voices in singing of *Psalms*. Now where we are left at liberty in these things, there it cannot be unlawful in it self to use, either the one way or other, as circumstances direct. Some circumstances may make one way or mode convenient at one time and in one case, and other circumstances may make another more convenient at another time, and in another Case, about external forms of worship. If our Lord had not intended us a Christian liberty in outward forms, there is no doubt but we should have had as particular direction in them as we have about the substance. And we may well use the words of *St. Paul*, in exhorting one another to stand fast in this liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. I mean in using this liberty one way or other, as it tends to Peace, Charity, and edification, and not the contrary as some urge it,

The Jews had their Liturgy in their  
Syna-

Synagogues, at the use of which our Saviour we may presume used to be present, in as much as we find he frequented the Synagogue where he lived, *Lu. 4. 16.* The antient Church before Popery lookt out into the World, had their Liturgy; and so have other reformed Churches besides ours unto this day. And we in this Nation so far as I can understand, have only been so unhappy as to break our selves in pieces about it.

Whoever soberly considers what hath been the effect of casting off the Liturgy and the established Church Government in this Nation, and of the liberty that was taken in the late times of liberty, may by this time be pretty well reconciled to it again, whatever his thoughts may have been heretofore. Can any considering man think that the Church of God and the concerns of Religion in this Nation, suffered at that rate by reason of the restraint put upon it by the Liturgy, before our late sad distractions

ons brake out, as it hath done by those sundry strange sects, monstrous opinions and practices, violent contentions, sore breaches and divisions, and the effects of these which that little time of liberty in which the Liturgy was cast off and the bonds of Government broken, hath produced?

Suppose there were or are some things superfluous or wanting in our Liturgical Form of Administration, or that it might be mended, or a better way pitcht upon, if the Higher Powers over us thought it fit: if this should be granted, yet this is no argument why you may lawfully separate: It is not its being less useful or less desireable to you than it might be made, that will bear you out in your separation, so long as you should do nothing in it self sinful in worshipping God in the use of it. The question is not at all whether this or another way were most eligible, were you at liberty to chuse without danger of making any Schism: But the great question to which

which you must bring your selves is, Which is most eligible, whether to do that which comparatively you think is inconvenient, less profitable, less useful, but yet not unlawful, or to make your selves guilty of a great and notorious Schism, and therein of a great Sin, and thereby also to make your selves accountable for the most dismal effects of our sad breaches and divisions; the very thought or suspicion of which, is enough to make the stoutest heart to tremble. Do not flatter your selves with this and that apology and pretence, for this seems to be clearly the State of your Case.

You talk of more purity of Communion, for the sake whereof you separate; but if you make your selves guilty of Schism to obtain a more pure Communion, and such a Schism as hath already produced most lamentable effects, in vain do you flatter your selves with a conceit of a more pure Communion. For your Communion being founded in a great Schism,

Schism, must needs *pollute* it, and make it far more impure than Parochial Communion can upon any reasonable account be suspected to be. You cannot say Parochial Communion is at all impure, because a man does not defile himself with sin in making his way to it, or having his share in it, as they do that make their way to yours through a sinful Schism. So that upon the whole matter, there is incomparably more cause to scruple Communion in your Assemblies, under your circumstances, than Communion in our Parish Congregations.

Nor does a defect in the exercise of Discipline by reason whereof some are admitted perhaps to Parochial Communion that should be debar'd it, make the Communion impure to them who cannot help it. A man is to *examine himself*, and then he may eat of that bread and drink of that Cup: his examining anothers Case is not made the condition of it. There were but *a few names* in the Church  
of

of *Sardis*, but what had defiled their garments and were dead, having only a name to live, and yet those few held Communion in the same Church, without defiling their own, *Revel.* 3. 4. You may if you please exercise that Discipline which the Scripture directs private persons to use towards scandalous Church-members; that is, not to *keep Company with them, or to eat or drink with them* in a way of familiar, voluntary and unnecessary Conversation, *2 Thes.* 3. 14. *1 Cor.* 5. 11. But this is no bar against doing your duty in coming to Gods Ordinances and in Communicating with others there who have not so defiled themselves, as was said before. The want of due Discipline, is indeed a great Calamity: but Discipline is not of the essence of the Church, no more than the rod is of the Family, but is only necessary for the well being and good Government of it.

There

**T**Here are two things I perceive which some of you make much of. The one is, *that when any thing becomes a condition of Communion, which is vehemently suspected to be unlawful, it frees a man from the guilt of Schism, although he break Communion upon it.* The other is, *that when that is imposed as a condition of Communion which ought not to be made a condition, if Schism be occasioned thereby, the guilt of it lies only on the imposers, and not on them upon whom it is imposed.* It argues in my opinion that arguments run very low with you, when you are fain to make shift with such as these.

For the first of these: Mens opinions of things, or suspicious concerning them, does not alter the nature of the things themselves, or make that no Schism which is so in it self. It may make a difference in the nature of the offence to be greater or lesser before God, according as men have been diligent or negligent in the

use of means to understand their duty in order to practice, but does by no means excuse them from all guilt in the Case, for the reason aforesaid. This Position therefore is doubtless false.

But is there indeed such a virtue in suspicion, as to sanctifie Schism it self, and to make it to be no Schism though otherwise it were? Why then I pray you, will not your suspicion do as much on the other hand? Why does not your suspicion of making your selves guilty of a notorious Schism, make that very lawful for you to do to avoid it, which were it not for the danger of Schism, and the evil of thwarting publick Laws, might otherwise seem inconvenient for you to do? Is there more danger in doing that, in the doing whereof it is uncertain to you whether you do well or ill in reference to your personal concern, than there is in doing that which it's certain tends to so publick a hurt and damage as Schism does?

When



When you alledge *Rom. 14. 23.* where it's said, *he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith, is sin:* I say, when you alledge this to justify your Schism upon the account of your doubting of the lawfulness of some things in the administration of holy things; you make things equal in your apprehension, which are altogether unequal in themselves. The Case there touched, was about the eating or not eating of such meats; the eating of which the Christians were not obliged to by any Law of God or Man: in which Case a man might be sure he should not offend against either, in forbearing to eat that about which the doubt was raised, nor against the publick peace of the Church. But you are at no such liberty in your Case: it is not a matter of such indifferency, whether you make a Schism in the Church, and act contrary to publick Laws, as it was for a man to forbear one sort of food, by

the forbearing of which, he should do no hurt to the Church by disturbing the peace of it, nor to Religion, by causing it to be evil spoken of. But yet that is not all, but your case and that there spoken of, is vastly different in another respect. The doubting of some Christian Jews touching the lawfulness of eating some meats, which the Christian Gentiles did eat without scruple, did arise from a want of satisfaction in their own minds touching the abrogation of the Mosaical Law, by which the eating of those meats was once expressly forbidden. So that your case is no ways parallel with theirs there handled by the Apostle; unless you could shew that those undetermined circumstances in the administration of holy things, the use of which you scruple, had been expressly forbidden by some Law of God, the abrogation whereof you question; which you will never be able to do. And therefore this Text is altogether impertinently alledged to justify you in your

your practice, as many more have been.

If you say, though these words, *whatsoever is not of faith is sin*, be brought to confirm a particular proposition, yet they contain in themselves an universal one: Admit this, for I will not deny it; yet they will not prove the contrary; that whatsoever is of faith (in this sense of faith) is no sin; that is, it does not prove that whatsoever a man is perswaded is no sin, is therefore no sin. And if it does not prove this, it will not prove that the act by which you make a Schism sinful in it self, does not do any such thing though you are perswaded it does not. Though a mans doubtfulness of the lawfulness of an action so long as the reasons of it preponderate and weigh down the reasons that tend to his satisfaction, make it unlawful for him to do it under those circumstances: yet this will not free him from sin in case he be in an error in being so perswaded, but he remains guilty of that error, and con-

sequently is necessary also unto the evil that is caused thereby. If mens ignorance and unresolvèdness in what is their duty, were a protection to them from sin-guiltiness though in error, it would be an inducement to them to indulge themselves in their ignorance and irresolution. But when a man does not know but that he is in such a *dilemma*, as that he sins whether he act or forbear to act, either in acting against his Conscience, or in neglecting his duty through error of Conscience, it will then awaken a man that desires to keep a good Conscience, both towards God and towards men, to use both diligence and impartiality in his enquiry after what is his duty indeed.

It is I think but needful upon this occasion to caution many among you against an *affected* scrupulosity. I call that an affected scrupulosity, when people love to be scrupulous about some things, when they are far from it in other things, wherein they have more reason to be scrupulous. As  
when

when they are nice, curious, and squeamish about undetermined circumstances in forms of administration of holy things, but do not at all, or nothing so much scruple the laying waste the peace of the Church, and the grieving and hurting others thereby, nor to lay Government it self low, nor to speak evil freely enough of them that differ from them, and the like, not to mention what is of more private concern. That such things are abroad is too apparent to be denied: but whence they proceed, is not perhaps so easily perceived. Only this is visible, that persons scrupulousness about conforming to publick Orders, hath obtained them among many, the reputation of the stricter sort of professors: And from thence it's possible they may fanſie themselves to be of more tender Conſciences than others, and think it may be a good ſign of the truth of grace in them; and upon that account, and of being thought to be ſuch by others, they may affect ſuch a ſcrupuloſity. But

such as are thus unequal in their scrupling of things, may do well to consider, that such scrupulosity is a more sure sign of hypocrisie than of a tender Conscience, or of the truth of grace, in whomsoever it is found, as symbolizing with the Pharisees, who strained at gnats, and yet could swallow Camels. Whereas a tenderness of Conscience of the right kind, will make a man as much afraid of erring on the right hand as on the left; which temper is in Scripture given as the Character of a good man, a man that turns not aside to the right hand nor to the left, but is the upright man. Though tenderness of Conscience is a right good thing if you understand thereby a fear of transgressing any known rule of duty, in one thing as well as another, in conjunction with a careful endeavour to know his rule in every thing, yet scrupulosity which is a fear of offending in that which a man does not know is forbidden, is not such a commendable thing as that men should be in love with it, or indulge

dulge it in themselves, but is rather proper to those who are superstitious than to the truly religious. Because it proceeds generally from the false Doctrine of men, and from a wrong notion of things, rather than from the obscurity of the rule of duty. It's no marvel if there be no end of scruples with them who believe that nothing can be done in faith, especially in the external administration of Gods worship, but what they can bring a Divine Command or Institution for, there being none of them that so teach, but practise otherwise, as you may soon perceive if you try all particular circumstances in their worship or administration of holy things, and must do so, unless they will confine themselves to the very words of the Lords Prayer, and to the form of words prescribed in baptism and the Lords Supper.

There are but two ways of knowing Gods mind concerning our duty, Natural light and supernatural Revelation. And whatever we are not  
confined

confined to by Divine determination, or restrained from by Divine prohibition in one of these ways, we may securely and without any scruple do, when we are thereunto called by Parents, Masters, Magistrates, or Ecclesiastical Governours. That which is not against us is for us in this case, as our Saviour also said in another case. The Rule of that which is our duty indeed, is doubtless very plain: and it would be a reproach to the wisdom and goodness of God to think otherwise: *He hath shewed thee O man what is good*, saith the Prophet. It is mens additions to Gods word, and their teaching that, as commanded or forbidden by God, which he hath not commanded and which he hath not forbidden, that is the true cause of our distractions. If men would but keep close to what God hath plainly determined, and follow the reason of their Governours in other things which are undetermined, and their own best reason where they are at liberty to do it; there would be little  
room



room for mens scrupulosity, or occasion of divisions in point of practice. And yet this is nothing but what the Scripture calls for when it directs and enjoins Children to obey their Parents, Servants their Masters, Subjects their Princes, and that *in all things, only in the Lord*, or wherein they are not countermanded by him.

Now concerning that other Position wherein is asserted, That when that is imposed as a condition of Communion which ought not to be made a condition, if Schism be occasioned thereby, the guilt of it lies only on the imposers, and not on them upon whom it is imposed, I answer; As to matter of fact it is true, that more may, and sometimes is made the condition of Communion, than is necessary. And when it is so, it usually becomes a temptation to more or less to run into Schism; and it likewise furnisheth such with some pretence to draw Disciples to themselves, who are ambitious of Heading a Party. In which respects it may be matter of great

great Prudence in order to the Churches Peace and Unity, to make no more than is necessary, the condition of Communion. But although more should be imposed as the condition of Communion than is necessary, yet if it be not so much more as makes it sinful to hold Communion on those terms, Then they must needs be guilty of the sin of Schism, who separate upon account of such an imposition. And the reason is, because such a Schism is without sufficient cause or just ground: which just ground is, when one cannot do otherwise than separate, without a necessity of sinning. Things may be ill imposed, as when they are inadequate to their end; and yet well observed by them on whom they are imposed, as when not sinful in themselves, and when by that means they and the Church suffer less in point of inconvenience, and enjoy a greater benefit in preserving Peace in the Church, than could be obtained in a way of opposition. If we should allow a liberty, much more  
if

if we hold it a duty for inferiours under Government, to oppose and withstand the Commands of their Superiours, as oft as they think they Command things inconvenient, though they should think right, so long as they do not Command things which they know to be unlawful for them to observe, we should soon bring intolerable confusion into Church and Common-wealth, into Families and all Communities of men where Government is exercised. Inconveniencies in such cases must be yielded to, rather than greater mischiefs drawn on us and on the Community by not yielding.

But you, at least many of you think, that it is an *infringing* of your Christian liberty, for men to determine and impose upon you, where God hath not determined and imposed: and that in such cases it would be a betraying of that liberty, should you not withstand such impositions. To which I answer, that thus far 'tis true, that when any thing is imposed by  
men

men under the notion of being commanded of God, of Divine Institution, or of necessity to Salvation, which is not so; as this would be a teaching for Doctrines, the Commandments of men, so a yielding to them so imposed, would be a betraying of our Christian liberty; and more than so, it would be a betraying of the Preterogative of our Lord unto the usurpation of men, and a making to our selves other Masters than Christ, and our selves servants of men in the prohibited sense, and all contrary to the expresse Doctrine of our Saviour and his Apostles. But though this be the case in the Church of *Rome* in many things, and in some respects among your selves also: yet this is not the case touching the things in dispute between you and the Church of *England*. The things imposed, at which you most stick, are not at all imposed under the notion of Divine right, but only upon a prudential account, being things mutable in their nature, and alterable at the pleasure of  
of

to the Non-Conformists. 143

of them who impose them, and are so declared in the Preface before the Book of Common Prayer. So that your Conscience is not imposed upon to take the things themselves for any other than they are in their own nature things left undetermined by God one way or other.

But then there is a sense in which it is not true, that our Christian liberty is unduly infringed by the imposition of men, although we were at liberty to do or not to do the things enjoined us, before such an imposition was laid upon us. Our Christian liberty does not exempt us from the duty of obedience to our Superiors in things which in their own nature are but indifferent, and out of such circumstances might be done or let alone. The same Divine authority which enjoins us to call no man on Earth Master, nor to be servants of men, enjoins Children also to obey their Parents, Servants their Masters, Church-members their Spiritual Guides and Governours, and Subjects their Princes,

ces, and that in all things in which they shall not disobey God in doing contrary to his Commands. So that when things indifferent or undetermined by God, are imposed by our Governours, Domestick, Politick, or Ecclesiastick, only as their Commands; our Christian liberty is no bar nor plea against them. And whoever pretends that it is, draws too near the wicked Gnosticks, who pretended exemption from being commanded and governed by men, by their being Christs freemen. Against which abuse of Christian liberty St. *Peter* cautioned the Christians then. For after he had exhorted them to submit themselves to every Ordinance of man for the Lords sake, 1 *Pet.* 2. 13, 14. he presently adds in *ver.* 18. *as free, and not using your liberty as a cloke of maliciousness*; not to pretend Christian liberty to cover their disaffection to Government, as the Gnosticks did.

Our Christian liberty is so far from being a bar to our Obedience to our Governours

Governours in all things not otherwise ordered by God, as that it is a great accommodation to us in yielding obedience to them without scruple of Conscience. For when circumstances in the external administration of holy things, are left so much undetermined by God as they are, we are at the greater liberty to yield obedience to the prudential determinations of our Governours, either one way or other, so long as they do not determine any thing against what God hath determined. In things even of this nature we are to be subject to our Governours for Conscience sake, *Rom.* 13. 5. that is, out of Conscience to God who commands our obedience to our Governours, but not out of Conscience to the things commanded by them, as if by any inherent holiness in them our Consciences were engaged unto them. And here lies the difference between superstition, and lawful obedience to authority.

In the Case of Superstition, the act is done out of Conscience to the

L

thing

thing done, as if sacred, though but indifferent in its own nature. But in the case of lawful obedience in indifferent things, the same act is done out of Conscience to God, not as commanding the thing, but as commanding my obedience to him in all lawful things, who commands me to do it, and commands it under no other notion but as a thing indifferent in its own nature, and not made sacred by any command or institution of God. Let me say this further to you: There is more of real Religion and true Christianity, in thus obeying the lawful Commands of our Governours, out of Conscience to God who would have it so, than I fear is well considered: and more of Irreligion, Profaness, and Hypocrisie, in slighting Gods express command in this, while we seem so very fearful and scrupulous to offend him in other things, where there is no such danger, nor concerning which we have no such express Declaration of Gods will. If we would but yield obedience to our publick Governours



vernours in such sort as Servants are required to do to their Masters, in singleness of heart, fearing God, and whatever we do therein doing it heartily as to the Lord & not unto man, we should therein serve the Lord Christ, and to better purpose than by many things on which greater stress is laid, and be as capable of *the reward of the inheritance* thereby, as by any other worship we give him, or service we do him. *Col.* 3. 22, 23, 24. I doubt it is not well considered what disservice is done to Religion when so much more than needs is pretended from it to trouble and disturb Government, and make men fickle and uncertain in their obedience to authority. Doubtless the way to make the great men of the Earth hearty Friends to the Christian Cause (and when they are so, it's much to its advantage) is to give them the experience of its goodness in making the most sincere professors of it, more hearty, forward, and constant in their obedience to them against all temptations to the

contrary, than any other men. Which is one reason as I am apt to think, why this duty of obedience to Governours is so much inculcated on the minds of Christians in the New Testament as it is, and why so black a brand is set on them that *despise Government or Dominion, and speak evil of Dignities*, as is in the Epistles of St. Peter and Jude.

I Cannot but think it a bad thing and of dangerous consequence, for you to strain things too far in making that in it self necessary to Church Communion, which either is not at all necessary, or but only *conveniently* necessary under some circumstances: & so in like manner in laying too great a stress on this or that mode of administration, to the exclusion of others not unlawful. For when you make those things as absolutely necessary to Communion as if they were peremptorily commanded by God, which yet are left to the liberty of Christians to use, or others in their stead as circumstances in the case shall direct; You then both transgress  
against

against the Laws of *Christian Liberty*, and make your selves guilty of *superstition*. And upon this very score, I fear there is much more of superstition among you, than you have any cause to suspect in the Parochial way. For those things at which you are most offended, in the Parish way, are not at all used or required to be used under the notion of their being enjoined by God, but only as things which may be used, or others in the stead of them, if our Governours pleased and thought it more convenient, as was said before. Whereas you placing Religion in refusing those things, which as they are not commanded, so neither are they forbidden by God, as fearing you should displease him if you should use them, do therein plainly act a part of *superstition*, while others who use them but only as they are, not placing any Religion in them at all, are altogether free from, whom yet you are ready causlessly to charge with it. For superstition as it is an *excess of fear*, consists as much if not

more, *in refusing and rejecting things as forbidden by God which are not, as it doth in using things as commanded by him which are not. Touch not, taste not, handle not, were doctrines of superstition (Col. 2.)* as well as that of the Pharisees, in requiring washing before eating as a piece of Religion, an action otherwise in it self not unlawful.

Besides, when you place Religion so much as you do in this or that external form and way, when perhaps neither that nor another which differs from it, is at all made necessary by God to the exclusion of the other, but that either the one, or the other, or a third, may competently answer the end for which external modes of worship serve and are appointed, which is for the administering the substance of that worship which is determined and appointed by God: I say, when you do thus place so much of Religion in one to the exclusion of the rest, it becomes a dangerous snare to many people to place their Religion much, and sometimes mostly in that form  
and

and way, and to think themselves better Christians than those of another form, though those other do not at all place their Religion in the external form they use, but in the spiritual substance to which the form is but as the clothing, and may be shifted and varied as occasion requires. There is neither the one form nor the other, but that Christians may be very affectionately devout and serious in their addresses to God by it, if the fault be not their own, if they do not by their own prejudice against it, or by carelessness in using it, deprive themselves of being so: this some that have had experience of both know. And it is not the use of the best form, whatever it is, will avail a man to make him inwardly in Soul devout towards God, unless his mind exercise it self about the spiritual matter and substance of the worship it self. And they that rest in the form, be it what it will be, and satisfie themselves only with using it, do but present God with the skin of the Sacrifice, instead of the Sacrifice it self.      L 4      And



to you, to make the terms of Communion somewhat easier for you.

I do not indeed expect that you should be perswaded by any thing I say, as they are my words. But I do expect, as well I may, that you should so much regard the concernment of your own account to God, and of the welfare of his Church, and of this Nation, as that you should consider, and that seriously, the *reason* of what I have laid before you. I dare not indeed be over confident of any great success in this Address, when I consider how little the endeavours of others have had which have been of somewhat a like nature. But this diffidence proceeds not at all from any suspicion I have touching the sufficiency of the reason and argument which is offered to perswade you by, but from the *rootedness* and strength of your *prejudice*, by which the strongest reasoning is many times resisted. *Elihu saith (Job 34.) that the ear tryeth words as the mouth tasteth meat.* Now we know that that meat which

is good and savoury in it self, and pleasant to the tast of those who are in a healthful habit of body, is unsavoury and perhaps nauseous to those of a vitiated palate. And there is just a like difference between the tast which men have of the same argumentation, upon the account of the corruption and uncorruptness of their Judgments. And therefore it will be your wisdom in order to your making a right Judgment, to divest your mind as much as possible you can of all prejudice, when you come to peruse discourses of this nature.

Some I understand have taken up a prejudice against somewhat I have done formerly of this Nature, from a mistake and misinformation, as if the turn of times had caused that alteration which hath been made in my mind about the things discussed in this Address. But to the end that none may be taken off from perusing and considering this discourse upon any such pretence, they may certainly know the untruth of such suggestions  
by



by this, to wit, that I published my *Retraction of separation*, in the year 1659. when separation was in greatest repute, and the turn of times they speak of then out of prospect to such as my self.

Saint *Paul* counted it but a small thing with him to be judged by men, or of mans Judgment, because he was to stand or fall not by their Judgment but by Gods. And considering that every one of us may say as he did in this; it very much concerns us in our enquiry, what is, and what is not to be done and practised by us, not much to mind what this or the other party will think or say of us, or whether this or that way will best accommodate us in our Worldly interest, but with uprightness to do all as unto God in the sight of God, to whom every one of us must give an account for himself. And because we must do so, therefore we should take as little as may be upon trust, no not from those we have the best esteem of, but every one to try his own work, that  
so

so he *may have rejoycing in himself and not in another*, as the Apostle speaks. And because there are not many that are willing to be at the pains to put themselves into a capacity of doing so in things controverted among us: Therefore it greatly concerns you who are Leaders of the people, to be very diligent and very faithful in trying the grounds on which you now go in ways so much differing as they do from all in a manner that have gone before you, yea even from the old Non-Conformists themselves: And if you have any convictions or misgivings, touching the unsafeness or unaccountableness of the way in which you conduct the people, let no Worldly interest or fear of displeasing or of losing them, prevail upon you to conceal it from them, but trust God in dealing faithfully, which will both bring inward peace and satisfaction, and interest you in his special care.

I Will add one thing more, and that is to put you upon considering, whether

ther by this Dividing way in which you are, you either have or are ever like to promote the *Power of Religion* among us in this Nation, as you might have done, if you had continued Communion in the Parochial way as heretofore. For I freely confess to you, that I vehemently suspect that you neither have nor are like to do it so well in the way you take, as you might in that. The power of Religion I conceive does very much consist, not in external modes of worship, or in a zealous crying up one, and crying down another, but in the operation of the mind, and inward and profound devotion of Soul to God in reference to the spiritual substance of his worship, whether in this form or that : and in our being like to our Lord Jesus Christ in humility, meekness, gentleness, peaceableness, universal Charity in seeking the good of all men by word and deed : in a patient bearing of unkind usage from men without expressing any bitterness of spirit towards them for it, by word  
or

or deed, but rather returning them good for evil, and the like. But now division in Churches, making of parties, rending and tearing and separating, hath quite another tendency than to promote these things. It tends to discompose the spirits of men in their reverend and awful approaches to God in the duties of his worship, to imbitter their spirits one against another, so that it becomes far more difficult than otherwise it would be, *to lift up holy hands without wrath and doubting.* It tends to fill the minds of men with uncharitable opinions of, and uncharitable affections to one another, and to exasperate their spirits one against another: It tends to the despising and contemning one another, and to a proud and disdainful magnifying of one party against another; to a swelling and grudging one against another: It tends to whispering, backbiting, and slandering, and to minister provocation and evil speaking one against another. And these things are the opposites to  
the

the power of Religion, and if you will believe St. *James*, tend to overthrow it and to introduce an ill spirited Religion in the room of it. *For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. Jam. 3: 16.* These things which are the natural fruits of Schism, are so like the fruits of those who are described to have a form of godliness without the power of it, as may well drive you from the Schism which you have made, only for a form sake. I would we had not too much experience of the truth of what I say, to need any proof from Scripture. However I will give you St. *Pauls* Judgment in the Case.

I have told you before that the Schism in the Church of *Corinth*, when St. *Paul* wrote to them, had not proceeded to any such height as to break the Church in pieces by separation and disclaiming Communion one with another; and yet upon the single account of their divisions and the effects of them, *they were yet but*

but carnal and walked as men, as he tells them, 1 Cor. 3. 3. although otherwise they were in every thing enriched, in all utterance and in all knowledge, coming behind in no gift. Chap. 1. 5. 7. And upon this very account their coming together, their solemn meetings for divine worship, were not for the better but for the worse, did not only keep them from growing, but set them backward, 1 Cor. 11. 17, 18. And then by what he says, Chap. 4. 6. and 2 Cor. 12. 20. we may see what the fruits and effects of their Schism were which made them so carnal in the Apostles account; such as were their being *pust up for one Teacher against another*, and their *debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, and tumults*, that were among them. Just such as your Schism hath brought forth among us in this Nation: only I fear the effects of our Schism hath as much exceeded theirs then, as our Schism it self hath exceeded theirs. And if these things have been, are, and will

will be the natural effects of Schism, which are so directly contrary and destructive to the power of Religion; Then you will do well calmly to consider, whether you have not mistaken the right method of promoting the power of Religion when you made so wide a breach as you have done in the Church to effect it.

If instead of this, each Christian of you had kept to Parochial Communion, and each *anted* Minister had kept their residence among them and Communion with them as private Members in the Parish way, and had also in a private capacity joined with those Ministers which have succeeded them, in doing all the good they could in the Parish; as by a private application and improvement of the publick labours of their Minister, together with Catechising and other personal instruction and exhortation privately administred to the several Families in the Parish: I say if such a thing as this had been done instead of gathering separate Congregations, I

M

nothing

nothing doubt but that by so doing, you would have taken an unspeakably far better course to promote the power of Religion in the Nation, than by what you have done, and to have procured a removal also of your burdens long before now, and to have been competently provided for in the mean time. But separation hath always of old been counted an undue, irregular, and dangerous way of seeking what you desire, even by the ancient Non-Conformists themselves, and was as much inveighed against by them in those times, as it was by the Conformists themselves.

You know right well that when Sacrificing, observation of Sabbaths and other instituted parts of Gods worship, came in competition with mercy, Charity, and the like, it by no means pleased him when these were thrust out that the other might take place. Much less have you reason to think that he is in such love as you are with one external manner and form of administration of worship when another  
may



may be used, as that he would have that contended for to the loss of Charity, Peace, and Unity, when as he hath commanded us *above all things to put on charity*, Col. 3. 14. and *above all things to have fervent charity among our selves*, 1 Pet. 4. 8. and that *peace should rule*, Col. 3. 15. Certainly to think that God is in such love with one form above another, under such circumstances, cannot proceed but from a misapprehension of the nature of God, and the nature of his worship.

If this then be true (and I cannot see how it can be denied but) that your separation, as all unlawful separation in the Church is, be of such ill abode to the power of Religion as I have shewed; Then if you be in any measure convinced that it is so, I hope it will not be grievous to any of you to whom the Commandments of God are not grievous, to make a stand, and bethink you, how you may take your selves off this way. And if the Higher Powers over us shall perceive any re-

lenting in you for what hath been done, I dare not suspect but that they will take your Case into compassionate consideration, and be willing to do their part towards the making up the great breach that hath been made in the Church, and in a healing way to hinder the growing mischiefs of it. Which God of his infinite mercy grant before it be too late.

That which hath occasioned all this unhappiness under which the Church of God among us groans, and Religion in the most spiritual and most concerning part of it extreamly suffers, is a want of a right understanding and due use of our *Christian liberty*. It was that which occasioned divisions and the unchristian effects of them in the Churches first planted by the Apostles. And the same thing hath produced the same and perhaps much worse effects among us in this Nation. Very many of the Jews who believed, did not at the first understand their Christian liberty, but  
thought

thought themselves still under the obligation of the Ritual Law of *Moses*: But others did, especially the believing Gentiles. And the want of a knowledge of it in the one, and the want of a due use of it in the other, begot an unchristian carriage in them one towards another. Upon occasion of which *St. Paul* said, *Gal. 5. 13.* *Brethren, you have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty as an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.* When he saith ye have been called unto liberty, his meaning doubtless in special was, that by the Christian Economy the believers were set at liberty from being tyed to the observation of a great variety of external modes and forms of worship to which the Jews by the Law of *Moses* were obliged. But though they were at liberty in these, yet they were still as strictly obliged to the spirit and moral substance of the Law as ever, one part whereof consisting in our love one to another, according to the Apostles words in the next

Verse, where he saith ; *for all the law is fulfilled in one word even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.* Now his counsel therefore to them was, that they would use this liberty of theirs so, as that in the use of it they might *serve one another in love*, that they would suffer Christian Charity to govern them in the use of their Christian liberty, and not to do any thing to the prejudice of that. And then cautions them that by no means they should *use this liberty as an occasion to the flesh*, by gratifying any carnal selfish humour under colour of Christian liberty, to the diminishing or quenching love, or to the ingendering *variance, emulations, wrath, strife, envying, or the like*, which are part of the works of the flesh which he after reckons up, *Ver. 20.* And intimates in the *14. ver.* that if they did thus abuse their Christian liberty, what the consequence of it would be, and that was their *hating one another first*, and then their being *consumed one of another.*

Con-

Contrary to which counsel of the Apostle, those Christians abused their Christian liberty when they put such a stress on it, and on standing unmoveably in it, without giving any ground to those Christians which did not understand it, and in placing so much of Christianity in it, as to despise, slight, and set at naught those Christians who did not understand and use it as they did, and that to such a degree, as to cause division, strife, and uncharitable censuring one another; by means whereof their good, the good way of Christianity it self, came to be evil spoken of, *Rom. 14*. Whereas if they had rightly used their Christian liberty, they would have denied themselves in not using that liberty, though lawful in it self, at such times and in such cases, when their doing so would have amounted to no more than the suffering of some personal inconvenience, and when their using of it apparently tended to a greater and more publick inconvenience, or mischief rather, such as the

breaking the Churches Peace and Unity, and the bad effects of it, both among themselves and in reference to them without, in causing them to think the worse of Christianity itself.

Thus St. Paul to avoid the abuse of his Christian liberty, would as he says, *eat no flesh while the world stands, rather than by eating it, to make his brother to offend*, 1 Cor. 8. 13. And that was not all neither; but in case the suspending the use of his liberty were not enough to secure the Peace and Unity of the Church, and what depended thereon, then the strong were to make use of their Christian liberty, in complying with the weak in things not in themselves unlawful, though out of those circumstances altogether inconvenient, rather than by standing on their Christian liberty, to run the forementioned hazards of disturbing the Peace of the Church, diminishing Charity, causing Divisions, to the stumbling of the weak, and hardening of Adversaries. And thus

thus St. Paul used his Christian liberty in complying so far as lawfully he might, though something against the grain, when circumstances made it necessary for him so to do, and that too by the advice of James and all the Elders at Jerusalem, Acts 21. 23, 24. For he, as he says, *became as a Jew to the Jews, and as without law to those without law, (yet in that under the law to Christ) yea all things to all men, and all for the Gospel sake*, as he says, that the Christian Religion might the better get up in the World, and not by a contrary course to lose ground, 1 Cor. 9. 20. 23.

And if we in this Age had been so wise, and so Christian as to have followed St. Pauls Doctrine and example in using our Christian Liberty in a way of lawful compliance, and in forbearing the use of it to shun a greater inconvenience; Christianity would have had a more lovely and attracting aspect, and have yielded more satisfaction and pleasure to the minds of the Professors of it; and  
gained

gained more upon others, than by the course we have taken we have suffered it to have or to have effected. O that there were but more of this spirit and temper of *St. Paul* among us, how happy should we be!

But the want of this, the want of a right understanding and due use of Christian liberty, hath doubtless been the great occasion of Church Division among us in these days, and of the unhappy effects of them, as well as they were of those that fell out in the days of the Apostles. There are and have been many people who have not understood the latitude of their Christian liberty; and from thence have proceeded many needless scruples, and those needless and groundless scruples, have turned many out of the way of their duty into other ways, ways of separation and opposition, and from thence have followed the lamentable effects I have formerly mentioned.

I say many have not understood the Latitude of their Christian liberty about



about the using and forbearing to use as circumstances should direct, several circumstantial matters in or about the external administration of Gods worship. And this hath been occasioned very much by some *false doctrine* which hath been formerly broached by some out of an ignorant zeal, and imbibed by many, and is still kept on foot by some among us: And that is, *That nothing is to be done in the worship of God, which he hath not commanded*: or at least nothing but what is of natural necessity, as time and place or the like. And by this means people have been brought to scruple Communion in the publick worship of God among us, because of some circumstances in the administration, which are not expressly commanded by God. And some, to persuade themselves and the people, that this Doctrine of theirs hath been true, have made use (ill use indeed) of many Scriptures which refer only to the substance of Gods worship, and not to external circumstances of administration.

ministration. Such for instance as forbid adding to, or diminishing from the word of God; and such as in a figurative Scheme of speech condemn worshipping of false Gods: as when less is said and very much more meant, as when the worshipping of the Sun and Moon, and mens offering their Children in Sacrifice to *Baal*, to *Molech*, is called the doing of that which God commanded them not, when in truth he had with a high hand forbidden it, *Dent.* 17. 3. *Jer.* 7. 31. and 19. 5. and 32. 35. This manner of speaking is an Hebraism not unusual, *Isa.* 66. 4. *And chose that in which I delighted not*, *Pf.* 5. *Heb.* 10. 38. They have made use also for their purpose, of such Scriptures as have condemned the changing and altering of some circumstances of worship which God had by express appointment fixed and determined. As the offering with strange fire by *Nadab* and *Abihu*, such as God commanded not, *Levit.* 10. 1. when he had otherwise expressly determined, that they should

should offer with fire *taken from off the altar*, Levit. 16. 12, and 6. 12, 13. And Jeroboams keeping the feast on the *fifteenth day of the eighth month*, the month which he had devised of his own heart, or a feast like unto the feast in *Juda*; things contrary to what God had expressly appointed. And Uzza's touching the Ark to guide it in a Cart, when God had expressly appointed that it should be *born on the Priests shoulders*, and the like. These things were not only circumstances not commanded by God, but they were used and done to the justling out what he had commanded; like the Pharisees making void the Commandments of God through their traditions, that is by thrusting the one out, and bringing the other in their room.

And if any thing of this nature could be proved to be in our publick worship, these Scriptures might have been pertinently alledged to condemn it, but not to prove that nothing may be done in the worship of God which  
he

he hath not commanded. For it's one thing to leave that which God hath commanded undone, and to do somewhat of our own devising instead of it; and another thing to do that which God hath appointed and something more, but not in opposition to it, but in pursuance of the same end. And thus *Solomon* offered Sacrifice in the middle Court of the Temple, besides the offering on the brazen Altar, though God had appointed the brazen Altar only for that purpose, 1 *Kings* 8. 64. And thus also King *Hezekiah*, with the Princes and People, kept the Feast of the Pasover, not only for seven days which was according to Gods institution, but after that for *seven days more also*, and yet so far as appears, with good approbation from God, 2 *Chro.* 30. 23. And whether the super-addition of the Cross in Baptism, with the words Concomitant, were not at first made upon reasons of like nature, I cannot say, but may be considered. And yet again, it's one thing to do a thing in the worship

ship

ship of God otherwise than he hath appointed when he hath appointed how it shall be done, both in reference to the intrinſick ſubſtance, and external circumſtance; and another thing to do it this way or another, as to the external adminiſtration, when he hath determined only the ſubſtance of worſhip what ſhall be done, and after what manner, as to the ſpiritual part, but hath left it at mens liberty, and undetermined in which of the ways it ſhall be done, as to the outward circumſtances of adminiſtration, when there are more ways than one in which it may be done. In the former caſe we are bound up to one way only, in the other we ſin not if we do the thing, either in the one way or the other. Only general rules in this caſe will direct men to chuſe that which appears to them beſt in it ſelf, other circumſtances conourring, and where we are at liberty to uſe that we judge beſt, without ſcandalizing any others, and without making any Schiſm by croſſing ſuch publick orders

orders as are appointed to keep peace and unity in the Church, and to preserve what depends upon them.

Now if there be such a liberty left in the outward administration of worship as I have supposed, at least in some Cases; then the proposition cannot be true, That nothing is to be done in the worship of God which he hath not commanded. And that there is such a liberty left will best appear by trying the matter in some instances. I will instance in that of Prayer, which is an eminent part of Gods worship. The substance of this piece of divine worship, God hath expressly determined, as that we pray to him, and in the name of his Son Christ Jesus, and for things according to his will, necessary or lawful, and with seriousness and devotion of Soul, in Faith and with fervency. But he hath no where told us that this shall be done without any fixed form or method, or without being pronounced out of a Book, or that it shall be done only according to the  
instanta-

instantaneous conception of the mind, both for matter and method. And therefore for any man to pretend that to do it one of these ways only, is necessary by Divine appointment, and the other disallowed by the same authority, is indeed an *adding to Gods word*, or a saying he saith what he hath not said. So that in truth many in this case and upon this account run into superstition, while they cry out most against it; and the Teachers of such Doctrine fright the people into *superstition*, while they pretend to deter and draw them from it. This is a plain case, if plain truth would satisfy such of you as most need it.

*Gesture* in Prayer, such as is kneeling, lifting up hands and eyes, and the like, are as well signs and expressions of inward devotion and means to excite it, as words are, and as really circumstantial parts of the external mode of worship. And yet I am confident you do not believe but that God hath left a liberty of choice in these, as circumstances shall direct.

N

And

And if that Doctrine were true, that nothing is to be done in the external mode of Gods worship but what he hath commanded, I vehemently suspect, that upon your utmost enquiry into what is commanded in the New Testament, in reference to the external manner of Prayer, that you would find your selves confined only to the use of the Lords Prayer, by that Precept of our Saviour, *Luke 11. 2. When ye pray, say, Our father, &c.* For I do not find any command in the New Testament but this, as to the external manner of Prayer. For when our Saviour in *Mat. 6. 9.* at a time and on occasion different from that mentioned by St. *Luke*, saith, *after this manner therefore pray ye, Our father, &c.* I reckon that herein he gave direction touching the matter and order of Prayer, but not at all how this matter should be uttered and exprest to God, further than in the form here mentioned. Though on the other hand I am far from thinking that our Saviour thereby intended to limit his Disciples



ciples to those words only. And although a liberty to use other words in expressing the same matter, seems to be thereby granted, yet in what manner, it is not said, as whether in a fixed form or otherwise. So that a liberty is still left, herein to be guided by emergent circumstances, in what way and manner to pray, as to what is external.

The like is true concerning other parts of Gods worship, as the two Sacraments, Baptism and the Lords Supper, and also of singing of Psalms. Although there is a command for the substance of these, yet there is no command for several circumstances conveniently necessary about the administration and use of these, and without which the substance cannot be administred, but a latitude is left therein, so that respect be but had unto general rules of edification, order, decency, and peace; and that things of less moment be under controul and government of greater. In all which much is and must be left to the prudence of those into whose

hands the providence of God hath put the ordering of affairs of this nature. So that if nothing be done to the corrupting of the substance of worship expressly determined, nor to the juggling out any thing relating to it which is determined and expressly appointed, nor to the defeating of the ends to which an external administration of worship serves, nor under pretence of divine appointment when there is no such thing: it will I assure my self never be proved that uncommanded circumstances in the external administration, are unlawful, though some of them should in simple consideration be thought inconvenient by some who yet are under a necessity of using them, or of doing that which is far more inconvenient, indeed sinful, by making a Schism. When *David* had resolved to build a Temple for the same ends for which a Tabernacle by Gods appointment had been built, God told him that he *did well in that it was in his heart to do it* (1 Kings 8. 18.) even then when he told

told him also, that he had never said to any of the Tribes or Judges of his people, *why build ye not me an house of Cedar?* 2 Sam. 7.7. Many more instances of this nature are elsewhere taken notice of out of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, in which times things relating to the external administration of Gods worship, were far more minutely determined by God, than they are in the New.

*Myft. of  
Iniq. un-  
folded.  
133, 134,  
135.*

Now the case under consideration being thus, those who first broached and those who have since abetted this Doctrine that asserts nothing to be lawful in the worship of God which he hath not commanded, when they extend it farther than to the substance of worship, have corrupted or rather gone about to overthrow the Doctrine of Christian liberty in great part. And they have thereby hid from the peoples eyes the liberty left them by Christ in these matters, and filled their minds with endless scruples, and hurried them into unlawful Schisms. If

those formerly, or more lately, who desired some alteration in the external form of administration used in our Church, had not run so high as to assert things unlawful, which by all their *Mediums* they could never prove to be so, but had peaceably and modestly pursued their desires from time to time only upon account of the inconveniency of some things as apprehended by them, and had satisfied themselves, that in doing so, they had gone as far as in duty they were bound, without ever rending themselves from Communion with the Church, or disturbing the peace of it by unsettling the peoples minds, and filling their heads with Jealousies, and their Consciences with scruples; they would without doubt have taken a more safe and Christian, a more prudent and probable way to have obtained their desires in time, than by that course by which they have exposed the Church and Religion to unspeakable disadvantages, they have done. And therefore after tryal of other ways, to  
come

come now to this at last, will doubtless be a more honourable and Christian course, and more prudential as to all worthy ends, both in reference to the honour of Religion, and its influence upon mens hearts and lives, the peace of the Nation, the composing of peoples distracted minds, the reducing of the erroneous, the frustration of the designs of adversaries, and the restoring Christian liberty to its right use.

For I have shewed before that men then use their Christian liberty best, when they can and do act in ways though but only lawful, when the common good of Christians, and the interest of Religion in the main in the World, calls for it, though otherwise and in some respects not pleasing to themselves. And so did St. Paul, and so he exhorted others to do when he said, *give no offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God: even as I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of many, that they may be saved, I Cor. 10. 32, 33.* And again, *let no man seek*

*his own, but every man anothers wealth,*  
ver. 24. And again, *we then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please our selves. Let every one please his neighbour for his good to edification: for Christ also pleased not himself, &c. Ro. 15. 1, 2, 3.* And again, *look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others, Phil. 2. 4.* And again, *I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some, and this I do for the Gospel sake, 1 Cor. 9. 22, 23.*

And if ever you would follow him both in his Doctrine and example, you must certainly alter your course. For I cannot imagine when I see how far *St. Paul* denied himself in his own liberty in things not otherwise acceptable to him, and perswaded others to do so likewise rather than breaches should be made or continue in the Church, and Charity be thrust out: and rather than Jews or Gentiles without, or in the Church, should be scandalized against the Christian Religion: I say when I consider this, I cannot

cannot imagine but that if he had been in your circumstances, but that he would have yielded to have done any thing not sinful in it self, and every whit as much as you need to do, to have prevented or removed such manifold and intolerable evils as Schism hath brought upon us.

You may and do perhaps think that if things relating to the external administration of Gods Ordinances and worship, are, at least in great part, left so much undetermined and at liberty, to chuse this or that as circumstances shall direct, as I have asserted they are: then why should you be restrained from making use of that which you apprehend to be the best? There is no doubt but that this may be done, this liberty be used, when other mens good or hurt is not concerned in it. But when my forbearing to use this liberty will tend to the publick good, and my using of it to a publick hurt (which is plainly the case before us) then I should not act like such a Christian as St. Paul was, if  
under

under these circumstances I should use that liberty which out of them I might freely use. St. Paul saith, *all things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edifie not: all things are lawfull for me, but I will not brought under the power of any*, 1 Cor. 6. 12. and 10. 23. His meaning I doubt not is, that though those things which he speaks of, were in themselves simply considered lawful, and such as to which he had an affection also, yet he resolved this notwithstanding, that he would not be brought under the power of them, but would hold and keep himself at liberty to use his liberty one way or another, according as it would be consistent with, or tend to the publick good, or to forbear to use it when it tended to the contrary. Now I have represented to you before in part, how many, great, and lamentable, the evils are, which are brought on this Church and Nation, by your assuming the liberty you use under the present circumstances



cumstances in which you are. And therefore methinks if you can but tell how to reconcile your selves unto St. *Pauls* mind and resolution, you should quickly and without any great hesitation, desist and put a stop to your present proceeding, and return to Parochial Communion.

I Hope you do not think that the interest of Religion in the Souls and lives of men, is more advantaged than damnified in the total account by your dividing; or that it would at all have lost in the general account of profit and loss, in case it never had been begun since the Reformation. If you do, I acknowledge my self herein to differ from you: unless you estimate mens religiousness by their zeal for and against outward modes and forms and opinions in Religion, and for and against parties, upon account of those forms and opinions; and not by their sober and  
 serious

serious piety, modesty, humility, fidelity, Justice and Charity, together with their Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ: which are the things by which I measure mens religiousness. And I appeal to all such among you as are in a like capacity with my self in point of age and experience in this matter, to make a Judgment of this Nature; whether there be not just cause to fear that Religion hath lost ground among us upon the account of our divisions, so as it never would have done if they never had been begun: besides the hazard we run of exposing our posterities to lose the substance by our contending for circumstance: and besides the temptation we have thereby put upon men to call the whole of Christianity into question, and thereupon to give reins to their lusts more than ever before since the Reformation was first made. I pray God so to bind the consideration of these things upon your minds, that you may be awakened thereby, out of I know not what dream into which

which a great many of the good people of this Nation have fallen.

There is nothing hardly in Christianity more evident than that matters of less moment are to give way to those of greater, circumstance to substance, conveniencies to necessities, a less convenience to a greater, a greater inconveniency to a less, duties only by Positive Institution, to those which are morally or naturally such; as might be shewed in many other Scriptures, besides those now *Hef. 6. 6.* touch'd on about Christian *Mat. 12.* liberty. And I think nothing *4. 5. 6. 7.* gives a more direct contradiction to all this, than the Schism that is made among us, or the things by which it is made: because by this you make matters of greater moment to truckle and yield to those that are less, circumstance to substance, matters necessary to those of conveniency, a greater convenience to a less, and so on. For I appeal to the light of your own reason, and to your Conscience, whether the affairs of Religion in reference

ference to the Church of God and to the World, are so much concerned in having Gods worship and Ordinances administred in your way, rather than in the way of the Church of *England*, as they are in the peace and unity of the Church, and in what depends upon them: Whether the Souls of men in general, both of those which adhere to you, and of those which do not, are advantaged by your way of administration above what they are and would be in the way of the Church of *England*, more than they are hurt by the division and separation that is made about that difference: Whether the Christian Religion be more honoured abroad in other Nations, among Christians and Infidels, by the one, than hurt by the other: Whether the Protestant Cause both at home and abroad, gains more by the one than it is hurt by the other: and whether more secured to posterity by the one, than endangered by the other: Whether error and heresie be more suppressd by the one, than propagated

to the Non-Conformists. 191

pagated by the other: and lastly, whether Charity, Humility, and other Christian vertues or graces, wherein the substance and power of Religion consists, are farthered in your way above what they are and would be in the way of the Church of *England*, more than they are hindered by Schism and separation.

Now if the affairs and concerns of Religion among men, do in these and many other respects lose more by your Schism than they get by having the worship of God administred in your way rather than in the way of the Church of *England*, as doubtless they do, and the thing is too manifest to be denied; Then you must needs be as certainly guilty of making matters of greater moment to stoop and submit to those of less, as ever the Pharisees were of passing over the weightier matters of the Law, and contenting themselves that they tithed Mint, Anise, and Cummin.

There is no such proportion of *value* in your way of external administration

stration of holy things, as different from that of the Church of *England*, as makes it worthy to be put in *competition* with the peace and unity of the Church, and what depends thereon. For the Scripture no where lays any such injunction upon us, to observe one way or manner of external administration of the right substance of worship, (supposing it to be done in common language) as it does for *the keeping of the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*: nor gives any such caution against any external form of administration, except that which is made in an unknown tongue, as it does against the breach of the peace and unity of the Church, and the many consequent ill effects thereof. Nor is there any such *utility* in your way of administration, as different from that of the Church of *England*, as makes it worthy to be put in competition with the peace and unity of the Church. I presume there is no sober, serious Christian among you, will say that your way of administration

tion

tion makes any such difference in the hearts and lives of Christians, but that there were heretofore and are now, Christians in Communion with the Church of *England*, as sober, righteous, and godly, as any among you. I know nothing therein to hinder a man from being as holy and as good as he hath a mind to be. It is the difference in mens more or less attendance to the substance of Christianity, that makes them better or worse Christians, and not their using different undetermined circumstances in the administration of worship.

And if it be so that your way of administration as different from that of the Church of *England*, holds no such proportion of value or utility, as makes it worthy to be brought in competition with the peace and unity of the Church; Then for you to bring it into competition therewith, nay to prefer it above the peace and unity of the Church, and what depends thereon, as it is apparent you do, is a thing altogether unaccountable, and a flat

contradiction to that vein of Doctrine in the Scripture which I have mentioned above.

I know you will be ready enough to say, that if it be so bad a thing in us to put undetermined circumstances in the administration of holy things into competition with the peace and unity of the Church, as you say it is; Then it cannot be good in them, who by imposing such things upon us as conditions of Communion, do put them into competition with the peace and unity of the Church also, which is divided upon that account.

There is I grant little question but that the imposing of nothing as a condition of Communion but what is generally free from exception, is a very good way to preserve peace and unity in the Church. But yet the using of some indifferent circumstances in the worship of God upon the first Reformation from Popery in this Nation, was doubtless thought as convenient for the bringing people to Church then,



then, as ever a complying with the Jews in their usages not sinful in themselves, was at the first Conversion of them to Christianity, thought convenient to bring them to, and to keep them in the Church then. And though you think the case is so altered since the Reformation, as that what was a reason of their use then, to wit the bringing folk to Church, is a reason of their dis-use, and laying aside now, as tending to the same end; yet if this thought hath not hitherto taken place in the minds of the Powers above us, or supposing they should be under a mistake in thinking otherwise, do you think that their preferring undetermined circumstances before the peace and unity of the Church, which you deem matter of just complaint in them, would at all justify you in doing the like? I am sure it will not, but greatly aggravate your fault. For wherein thou judgest another (as St. Paul saith) thou condemnest thy self; for thou that judgest, doest the same things, Rom. 2. 1.

The consideration of the inequality & disproportion that is between some undetermined circumstances in the administration of holy things, and the unity and peace of the Church; would, as I have reason to presume, have prevailed before now to have obtained some ease for the sake of such as are really conscientiously scrupulous, but withal peaceable, and as scrupulous to disturb the peace of the Church on the one hand, as they are to disturb the peace of their own Conscience on the other; I say, this probably would have obtained ere now, had not your carrying things with so high a hand of opposition, obstructed it, and hardened their hearts against you, in whose power it is to ease you. And I am very full of confidence, that that very consideration I have now mentioned, would yet prevail with them to give you ease, if you would but abate your open opposition, and comply so far as I am confident the greatest part of you can do, without offending your Conscience. For if you could but  
yet

yet be prevailed withal thus to do; who is so hard-hearted and so regardless of the unity and peace of the Church, and what depends thereon, as would not in their places and capacities seek your ease? But if you cannot be prevailed withal, I cannot easily tell you how much I dread the consequence of it.

**T**IME was when it was the apprehension of many of you, that private and personal application by you that are Ministers, to the people of your respective Parishes, from House to House, was of very great use for their profiting in Religion; yea so great, that some of you have thought you did more good that way, than by your publick ministrations; and that, in great Parishes especially, more Ministers than one were necessary for the carrying on of this and the publick work. Yea, you thought this so profitable and so necessary, as that the Ministers in several Counties,

as of *Worcester, Essex, Cumberland, Westmorland, &c.* did enter into a mutual agreement to ingage in this work, and published the same with intent as I suppose to excite others to do so likewise. This considered, if the promoting of Religion among the people, both in knowledge and practice, was and is your great design (and I will not be so uncharitable as to judge it neither was nor is) I cannot but think I confess that you were somewhat unhappy, and the Nation too, in that you did not think of and undertake this method of imploying your Talents, rather than that you have chosen, when necessity in some sort put you upon it, and wherein you might have been so greatly serviceable; and that not only without offending against the publick Laws and Peace of the Church, but also to your great honour and high acceptance with good men. And if those who now support you in point of Livelyhood, in the way you are in, would not or will not do the same or  
more

to the Non-Conformists. 199

more in that other way (not to say what might reasonably be expected from many others who do not like the way you are in) they would give a shrewd ground of suspicion, that not the advancement of the power and practice of Religion among us, but somewhat else prevails with them to do what they do in that kind.

Undoubtedly the peace and unity of the Church (as I have shew'd, and you cannot but know) is a matter of that mighty moment for the increase and growth of all *kindly* religiousness in your selves and the people, and the contrary so certain to produce contrary effects, that it would be very worthy of you to do what possibly you can to stop the one, and to procure the other, though it should cost you some considerable self-denial to do it. Remember and consider that excellent advice of *Clemens* Pa. 69. *Romanus*, in his Epistle to the Church of *Corinth*, in a time when sad divisions and contentions prevailed among them, as they do now among

among us. He therefore (saith he) that is strong, merciful, full of Charity among you, let him say, If it be for me, that sedition, contention, and division arise, I will depart, I will be gone whither you will: I will do what the people command me; so be it that the flock of Christ may live in peace with those Presbyters that are set over them. He that shall do this (saith he) will win himself much honour in the Lord, and every place will gladly receive him. Let me say to you upon this occasion, as St. Paul also said in his Epistle to the same Church, Chap. 14. 36. *What? came the word of God to you only, or from you only? Do you think that Religion in the Nation depends so much upon your public labours, as that it would sink if you did not thereby uphold it? Methinks you should not, I am sure there is no reason why you should. And if not, then either Clemens Romanus was out in his forementioned advice, or else you seem to be so in your present practice as differing much from it.*

I Will add one thing more before I conclude. I find by some of your printed Papers as well as by personal discourse, that it runs much in your minds, that if you could but be indulged a liberty by the Civil Powers in the separate way in which you now act, it would free you from the imputation of Schism; which I apprehend, under your favour, to be a great mistake, for these reasons. First, Because your practice herein, notwithstanding such an indulgence, would be a deviation from the Primitive pattern of Church Communion. All the Christians then, as I have shew'd before, did still associate together in Church Communion, in the places where they did reside; and accordingly the Churches received their denomination of being the Church at *Rome*, at *Corinth*, &c. from the civil bounds. And I have shew'd also, that so to do is most accommodate to the ends and purposes of Church Communion. And for any in these Churches,

Churches, whiles they did reside upon the place, to have rent themselves off from Communion with those, and to have set up for themselves in the same place (otherwise than what was done with consent when their numbers made it convenient to meet in distinct assemblies) or should have gone and have united themselves with a Church in another place, as disowning Communion with those from whom they went off, when there was no necessity of doing so, or of sinning, would have been a down-right Schism, and seems to have been the very case of those St. Jude speaks of, that *separated themselves, being sensual, not having the Spirit, Jude 19.* Now then when there have been Churches of Christian Professors in this Nation, and distinguished by the civil bounds and Precincts, for order and government sake, in like sort as they were in the Apostles times; for you in this case to rend from them, and set up other Churches in the same places, and renounce Communion with the first, by  
word



word or deed, without a necessity to do so or sin; though you should not perhaps sin against the Civil Power in doing so, in case you had their leave, yet this would not free you from Schism in making a causeless breach in the Church.

Secondly, I have shewed that a gathering out the better people from among those which are not so good, and to make a new Church thereof, is cross to one principal end of Church Consociation, which is, that the better might help the worse, and the strong bring forward the weak, the more spiritual part help to spiritualize the more carnal. The contrary is, as if the grown persons in a Family should withdraw from the Children, and the healthy from those that are sick, which every body would cry out of. And if the Higher Powers should connive at such disorders, the thing would be never the better in it self.

Thirdly, I have shew'd what bad effects Schism does naturally produce;  
and

and how contrary it is in it self to the Doctrine of the Apostles ; and if it be and do so , leave from the Civil Powers to perpetrate this evil, would never sanctifie it , or make it other than it is in its own nature , that is sinful.

**H**AVING said thus much as you see, I shall not need to make any farther Apology why I have done it, than what you have in the beginning of this Address. And as to what it consists of, I shall Trust it to speak for it self (if you will but make that allowance to the Author, which considering his circumstances, I am confident ingenuity will not deny him.) Only this I can, and therefore may say, that I am not conscious to my self of having offered any abuse to the Scriptures by any undue interpretation, or to you by any mis-application of them, nor by any mis-representation of you, in principle or practice :

Office: though I do not think you are  
 all of a piece in both: And there-  
 fore all that's said is not to be applied  
 to all alike, all being not alike guilty  
 of the Schism so much complained of  
 in this Address. As my intention in  
 the undertaking of which was the  
 publick good; so upon review I cannot  
 perceive that I have said any thing  
 but what is one way or other agree-  
 able to that design, nor unbecoming  
 any man of a modestly publick spirit.  
 And if the removal of a publick  
 grievance out of the Church, and the  
 procuring its publick benefit, hath  
 made the mention and discovery of  
 those things necessary, the mention  
 and discovery of which are likeliest  
 to offend some; yet the necessity of  
 that as a means to so worthy an end,  
 will I hope plead my excuse with  
 them, and satisfy them upon after  
 thoughts. And if this Address may  
 contribute any thing to the publick  
 good, either while I am alive, or af-  
 ter my Death, though but in the  
 least degree, (of which I do not al-  
 together

together despair) I shall not lose my  
end.

Wherefore to conclude : If you  
would not then have the power and  
spirit of Religion cease from among  
us, or degenerate into form and un-  
kindliness of temper : If you would  
not leave the people in superstition,  
into which you seem to have led them,  
nor be guilty of adding to Gods word,  
by making them believe he hath for-  
bidden and commanded, what he hath  
not forbidden nor commanded, but  
left to such direction as general rules  
and emergent circumstances shall sug-  
gest to prudent men : If you would  
not vary from the Primitive pattern  
by separating from the Christian Con-  
gregations where you reside, when  
you are not necessitated to it or to sin :  
If you would not tempt men to think  
that Religion is but an uncertain thing  
and matter of squable : If you would  
not give occasion of jealousie, that  
due regard is wanting in you to or-  
der and Government : If you would  
not betray our Posterity into the  
hands

to the Non-Conformists. 207

hands of Popish Policy, and Power,  
nor expose the Church of God in this  
Nation to that ruin which hath befall-  
en other Churches in other places and  
Ages of the World through divisions  
among themselves; Then be perswa-  
ded I beseech you to consult some  
better things than the keeping still  
open the wide breach among us can  
possible promise you.

*Farewel.*

---

**THE END.**

---